No.46

RED SHIRT / YELLOW SHIRT

Protest and Insurrection in Thailand 2005–2014

7581
DANGER
ทบ.

ASIA@WAR SERIES

DEAN WILSON

Helion & Company Limited
Unit 8 Amherst Business Centre
Budbrooke Road
Warwick
CV34 5WE
England
Tel. 01926 499 619
Email: info@helion.co.uk
Website: www.helion.co.uk
Twitter: @helionbooks
Visit our blog http://blog.helion.co.uk/

Text © Dean Wilson 2023
Colour Profile: David Bocquelet, Luca Canossa, Anderson Subtil 2023
Maps © Micky Hewitt & Tom Cooper 2023

Designed and typeset by Mach 3 Solutions (www.mach3solutions.co.uk)
Cover design by Paul Hewitt, Battlefield Design (www.battlefield- design.co.uk)

Every reasonable effort has been made to trace copyright holders and to obtain their permission for the use of copyright material. The author and publisher apologise for any errors or omissions in this work, and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

ISBN 978-1-804514-83-2

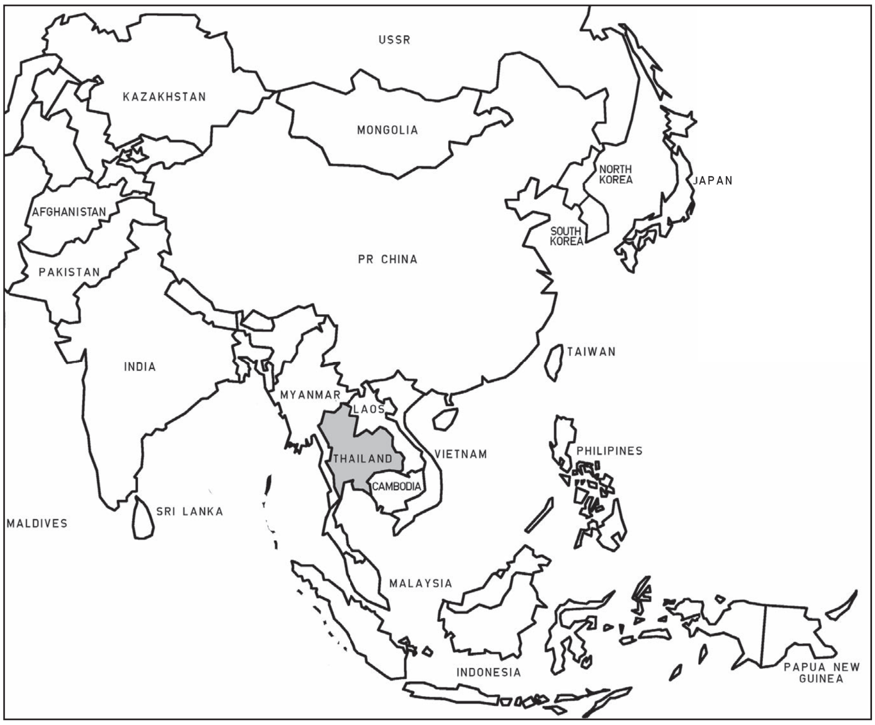
British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the express written consent of Helion & Company Limited.

We always welcome receiving book proposals from prospective authors.

CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms 1
Introduction: The Royal Thai Army and the Military History of Thailand 2
Chapter 1: The Royal Thai Army in the Twenty-first Century 7
Chapter 2: The Royal Thai Police 15
Chapter 3: The Political Crises of 2005–2010 34
Chapter 4: The Political Crises of 2010–2014 and the 2014 Coup 44
Chapter 5: Who’s Who? Biographies of Personalities of Note 66
Appendix 70
Bibliography 73
Notes 73
About the Author 74



Note: In order to simplify the use of this book, all names, locations and geographic designations are as provided in *The Times World Atlas*, or other traditionally accepted major sources of reference, as of the time of described events.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPP	Border Patrol Police
BRN	*Barisan Revolusi Nasional* (National Revolutionary Front)
CDR	Council for Democratic Reform
DPP	*Dewan Pimpinan Pusat*
EC	Election Commission
GMIP	*Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Pattani* (Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement)
PAD	People's Alliance for Democracy (Yellow Shirts)
PARU	Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit
POMC	Peace and Order Maintaining Command
PPP	People's Power Party (*Phak Phalang Prachachon*)
Red Shirts	National United Front for Democracy (UDD)
RTA	Royal Thai Army
RTAF	Royal Thai Air Force
RTP	Royal Thai Police
RTSF	Royal Thai Special Forces
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
TNPD	Thailand National Police Department
TRT	Thai Rak Thai
UDD	National United Front for Democracy (Red Shirts)
UN	United Nations
Yellow Shirts	People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD)

Introduction: The Royal Thai Army and the Military History of Thailand

The modern Royal Thai Army (กองทัพบกไทย) was formed in 1874 with the mandate to protect the Kingdom of Thailand (ราชอาณาจักรไทย) due to the new security threats arising following the 1855 Bowring Treaty with Great Britain that saw the kingdom opening up to international trade. The establishment of the Royal Thai Army, with the King as the head, would counter any threat of colonisation by the major Western powers with Britain having conquered Burma in the west and France conquering Indochina in the east.

The Army had, in effect existed, prior to its formal implementation, since the thirteenth century. The history of Thailand, the then Kingdom of Siam, is full of tales of military conquest, glory, empire building and raging battles with the Burmese, Shan, Khmer, and Lao – amongst others – before the country's kingdoms were unified under the control of one king, with the capital established first at Ayuttiah, then later moving to Bangkok. Siam was a collection of states and kingdoms, the oldest being the Sukhothai Kingdom, establishing its independence from India in 1238 with La Na in the north being established in 1292 and being absorbed by the short-lived Thonburi Kingdom in 1775. Various Mon, Lao, Khmer, and Malay states vied to control Thailand with the Thai kingdoms fighting each other for control of the land. European contact began with a Portuguese mission to the Ayuttiah Kingdom in 1511, with Ayuttiah becoming a prominent regional power by the end of the fifteenth century until it was destroyed during the Sino-Burmese war during the eighteenth century. The Thonburi Kingdom under King Taskin the Great was established from the shattered remains and replaced in 1816 by the establishment of the Rhatanoskin Kingdom and Siam (present-day Thailand) under Rama I Buddha Yodfa Chulalok (พระพุทธยอดฟ้าจุฬาโลก), the first king of the current Chakri Dynasty. Siam remained the only nation in Southeast Asia to avoid colonisation by the Western powers – though did have to cede territory and make trade concessions in unequal treaties – but retained its border sovereignty and even fought France in the Franco-Thai War, before siding with the Allies during the First World War.

In 1932, the military – with the aid of the civilian population – overthrew the system of absolute monarchy replacing it with the current system of constitutional monarchy. Since that period the military has been involved in Thai politics, procuring many prime ministers, and being involved in many coups d'état; the most recent being the bloodless coup against Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006, and the taking of power from the caretaker government in 2014, these recent events are covered in detail later in this book.

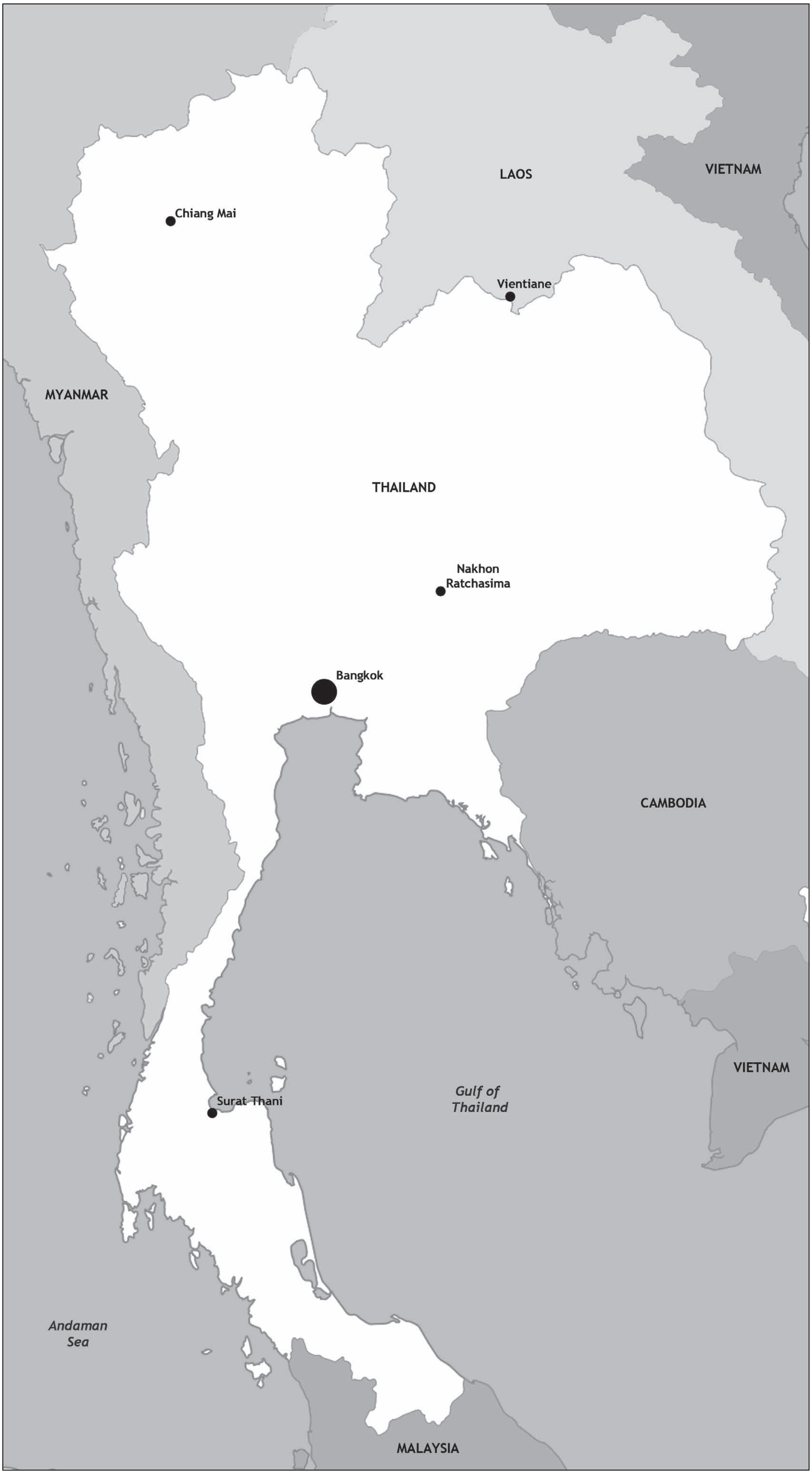
After a coup in 1932 and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy Siam renamed itself Thailand and entered the Second World War as an ally of the Japanese, fighting France in the Franco-Thai War. After the war Thailand established itself as a major ally of America, fighting communism under the failed Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and then as a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The RTA has been involved in international peacekeeping, with deployments in support of the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) from 1999 to 2002 and deployed to Iraq as part of the Multinational Force, contributing over 420 personnel from 2003 to 2004. This trend of international involvement was first established during the Korean War and later the Vietnam War, with a large force being deployed to assist the South Vietnamese government. Post their deployment in Iraq the United States government declared Thailand as a Major non-NATO ally.

The role of the RTA is the protection of the homeland of Thailand, the monarchy, aristocracy, and people against all threats, both foreign and domestic. The armed forces also have a role in ensuring public order, participating in social development programmes, and aiding the civilian government. The RTA also assists in dealing with national disasters and, with the Royal Thai Police, narcotics suppression and combating narcotics trafficking, especially within the border areas.

1893: The First Franco-Thai War

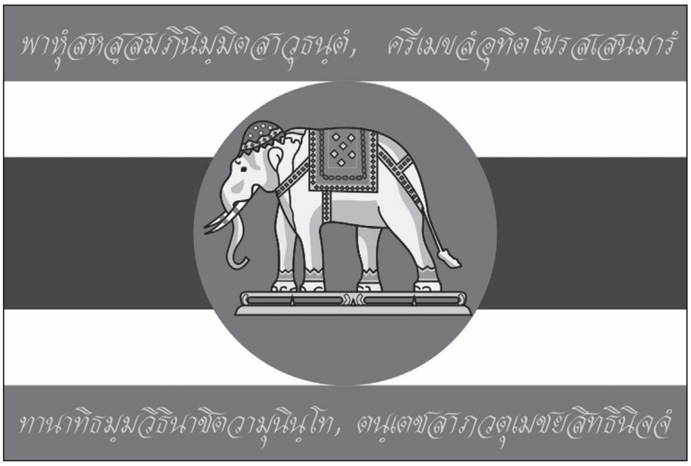
French forces rapidly dominated Southeast Asia with the conquest of Indochina (Tonkin, Annan, and Cochin-China) and invasion of the Kingdom of Cambodia. The French also tried to bring Laos – a protectorate of Thailand – under French control but failed. The French responded by sending two gunboats to Bangkok, in what


LAOS
VIETNAM
Chiang Mai
Vientiane
MYANMAR
THAILAND
Nakhon Ratchasima
Bangkok
CAMBODIA
VIETNAM
Surat Thani
Gulf of Thailand
Andaman Sea
MALAYSIA

Map of Thailand showing major cities. (Map by Tom Cooper) was known as the Paknam Incident, and moved forces into the northeast of the country. The Thai government eventually acceded to French demands and surrendered Laos to French control.

1917–1918: The First World War

King Vajiravudh (วชิราวุธ), Rama VII joined with the Allied Powers by declaring war on the Austro-German forces bringing Thailand into the First World War. A small force of Thai volunteers was sent to France in 1917, consisting of several ambulances and medical personnel with a small infantry force as protection, under the command of Prince Chakrabongse Bhuvanath, (จักรพงษ์ภูวนาถ). In 1918 a small air element was also sent to France, operating Nieuport IVs and was operational as the ceasefire was signed. Although the contributing force was small (approximately 1,200 personnel), Thailand was given the honour of marching in the victory parade in Paris at the cessation of hostilities.


พาหุํสหสฺสมภินิมฺมิตสาวุธนฺตํ, ครีเมขลํอุทิตโฆรสเสนมารํ
ทานาทิธมฺมวิธินาชิตวามุนินฺโท, ตนฺเตชสาภวตุเมชยสิทฺธินิจฺจํ

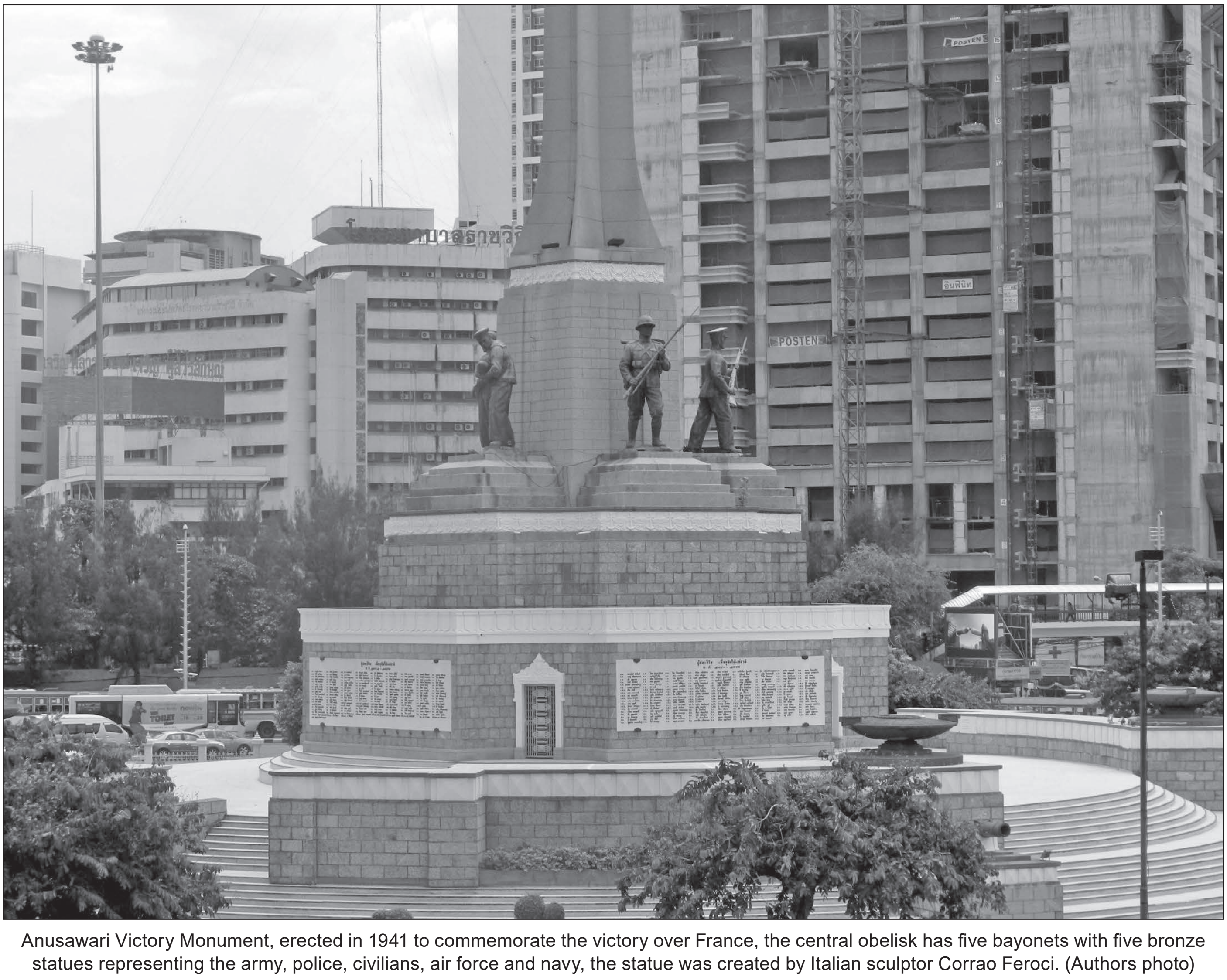
Siamese Expeditionary Forces Flag, combining the traditional Siamese flag along with newer elements. (Thai MoD, public domain)

1940–1941: The Second Franco-Thai War

Thailand's well equipped modern army attacked the weakened Vichy French Forces in Laos with the objective of returning ceded territories back to Thai control. Beginning in October 1940 Thai forces overwhelmed the small French garrisons on the border of Laos and openly confronted French and colonial forces. The war not only returned the ceded territory of Laos to Thailand but also promoted the program of nationalism of then Prime Minister Pleak Phibulsonggram (แปลก พิบูลสงคราม). Thailand lost 54 troops whilst France suffered 420 killed or wounded.

1941–1945: The Second World War

The Thai Prime Minister Phibulsonggram had managed to remain neutral between the powers of Great Britain and Japan, who had invaded French Indochina. This ended on the morning



Anusawari Victory Monument, erected in 1941 to commemorate the victory over France, the central obelisk has five bayonets with five bronze statues representing the army, police, civilians, air force and navy, the statue was created by Italian sculptor Corrao Feroci. (Authors photo) of 8 December 1941 when Japanese forces invaded Thailand in nine separate locations: in the east via Cambodia, and the south. The war lasted a single day, ending with the fighting at Prachuap Khirikan Airfield on 9 December. The Prime Minister signed the surrender terms with the Japanese, giving them free passage towards Burma and Malaysia. During the Japanese occupation, the Seri-Thai (Free Thai) movement – assisted by the Allies – was active, destroying Japanese lines of communication, scouting for Allied bombing raids, and providing a constant threat to the Japanese occupation forces.

1950–1953: The Korean War

Thailand provided troops to the UN Forces serving in Korea in the form of the 21st Regiment (approximately 1,300 men), and in addition also provided four naval vessels and three C-47 aircraft in support. The Thai forces suffered heavy losses, with over 130 men killed in action.

1963–1975: The Vietnam War (Third Indochina War)

Thailand did not become fully involved with the conflict in Vietnam until 1963 when it allowed US forces to construct airbases within the sovereign territory (including Udon Thani, Khorat and largely expanding Don Muan Airport). It was also involved in covert operations in Laos from 1964, providing guides, soldiers, support elements and supplies. The Thais were paving the way for deployment of more ‘substantial’ troops and by late 1966 had deployed combat personnel to Vietnam, at Long Thanh and Bien Hoa, in the form of the Queen’s Cobras Regiment. Thai forces suffered severe losses – being involved in the thick of the fighting in their area of operations alongside the US 199th Light Infantry Brigade – suffering over 1,300 killed and many more wounded. The Thai forces also operated in conjunction with the US military in providing medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) helicopters and crews. By 1975, with relations between Thailand and the US souring, US forces were forced to withdraw and close their air bases, and Thailand’s involvement in the conflict was at an end.[1]

1976–1980: The Communist Insurgency

Post the wars in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and the fall of those countries to communist forces, communist involvement in Thailand, due to its close proximity, was emboldened. The Thai Communist Party enjoyed multiple successes and much support, especially after the Thammasat University massacre in 1976 and the repressive right-wing policies of then Prime Minister Tanin Kraivichien (ธานินทร์ กรัยวิเชียร). Sympathisers flocked to the Communist Party and the movement increased: by the late 1970s it is estimated that more than 12,000 armed insurgents were operating in the north-east along the Laotian-Cambodian border. The Thai army and police increased operations to stem the flow of insurgents over the border, cut their arms supplies and eliminate their fighting ability. By early 1980 all the insurgents were either defeated or incarcerated and the insurgency was at an end.

1979–1988: Vietnamese-Thai War

With the Vietnamese annexing Cambodia in 1978 and overthrowing dictator Pol Pot, the communist forces of Vietnam had approximately 300,000 personnel in Laos and Cambodia, posing a severe threat to Thailand as it had lost its previous buffer of

Queen’s Cobras Regiment, Operation Ben Cam, Vietnam, February 1969; members of the 2nd Brigade advancing along a jungle trail.
(Authors collection)

General William Westmoreland presenting Valorous Unit Citations to members of the Queen's Cobras Regiment and streamers to the colours, Vietnam. (Authors collection)

Cambodia. Small skirmishes, border incidents and conflicts broke out along the lengths of Thailand's borders.

1987–1988: Thai-Laotian War

A small conflict erupted between Laos and Thailand in the border provinces of Saiyabuli and Phitsanulok over the exact demarcation of the border. With combined casualties of over 1,000 killed in the skirmish, both sides withdrew with no satisfactory settlement.

1999–2002: East Timor

Thailand, alongside 28 other contributing nations, provided a force for the UN International Force for East Timor, and also provided the contingent commander, Lieutenant General Winai Phattiyakul. This was the first overseas deployment of Thai forces since the cessation of the Vietnam War in 1975.

2002–Present: Myanmar Border Wars

With occasional clashes, skirmishes and 'invasions' by Myanmar's forces, drug smugglers and insurgents, the border has been frequently opened and closed depending on the prevailing military situation. An insurgency has been waged between rival drug factions, Myanmar insurgents and the Royal Thai Border Police, PARU and Special Forces in the area of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, where they have clashed from 2002 to the time of writing. Chiang Mai was attacked in 2007 by small groups of insurgents using heavy weapons, including mortars and recoilless rifles, though they were soon hunted down and eliminated. Conflict has continued to escalate in the region and casualty figures are in their thousands of both civilian and insurgent deaths. Since 2016 the Myanmar military has persecuted the Rohingya people in what amounts to genocide and ethnic cleansing. A junta seized control in Myanmar in 2021 and since that time border clashes and skirmishing have intensified as an overspill from Myanmar military operations along the Myanmar/Thai border.

2003–2004: Iraq, Second Gulf War (Operation Enduring Freedom)

After the US invasion of Iraq Thailand contributed a force of over 400 troops for nation building and medical assistance to the post-Saddam Iraqi government. Thailand lost two soldiers with five wounded in the 2003 bombing of Karbala. Thai forces withdrew in 2004.

2004–Present: Southern Insurgency (Pattani War)

The Islamic secessionist insurgency in the south of Thailand within the provinces of Yala, Pattani (or Patani) and Narathiwat is an ongoing conflict waged by ethnic Malays and Islamic rebels wanting a separate Muslim state against government forces. The protests escalated to armed conflict when terrorists attacked ethnic Thai civilians (including Buddhist monks) in 2004. The RTA responded with an increased military presence in the region. With over 1,600 insurgents killed, approximately 1,500 incarcerated and over 2,800 civilians killed in the conflict, the RTA had lost over 150 military personnel by January 2012, and is currently handing the situation to a civilian body utilising the newly created Special Task Force (combining Royal Thai Police, Special Forces and RTA personnel).

CHAPTER 1

THE ROYAL THAI ARMY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The Royal Thai Army (RTA) currently has over 850,000 serving personnel. The nominal head of the armed forces is His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn (วชิราลงกรณ) Rama X, successor to King Bhumibol Adulyadej (ภูมิพลอดุลยเดช) Rama IX upon his death in October 2016. The day-to-day running of the army is assigned to the Ministry of Defence of Thailand under the Minister of Defence (a Cabinet office) and commanded by the RTA HQ headed by the Chief of Defence Forces (Thailand). The Air Force and Navy also come under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence and are commanded by the Chief of the Air Staff and Chief of the Navy respectively. Currently General Narongpan Jitkaewthae is the Commander-in-Chief of the RTA, replacing General Prayuth Chan O-Cha in October 2014, who retired to pursue his political career, as detailed later in this book.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand makes it a duty for every male of the age of 21 to serve in the armed forces, so that any male over the age of 21 who has not undergone Reserve Forces Training (whilst at school or college, or separately if having left school) is subject to a random draft process, with those being chosen subjected to a 24-month full-time service. Volunteers are subjected to an 18-month period of service, depending on their education. Those wishing to remain in the armed forces must pass a barrage of tests as well as having served with impunity and have the necessary letters of accreditation and support.

The Organisation of the Royal Thai Army

The RTA is organised into four army areas with nine infantry divisions, 16 tank battalions, one armoured division, three cavalry divisions (in effect light armoured divisions) and one Special Warfare Command. The RTA uses equipment from a wide variety of sources including the USA, the PRC, Ukraine and Israel, some principal items of which are detailed in the appropriate sections below.

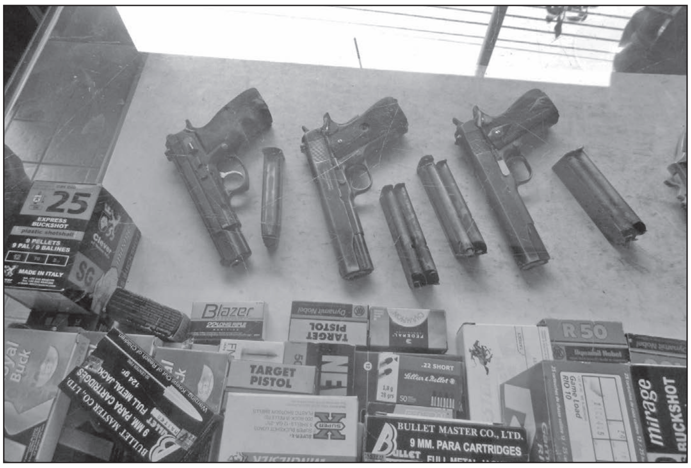
The main formations of the RTA can be summarised as follows:[1]

- Nine infantry divisions with 16 tank battalions
- One armoured division equipped with M60A3 tanks, being supplemented with Ukrainian and PRC designs
- Three cavalry divisions equipped with M41 Walker Bulldog light tanks (being withdrawn) and M113 APCs
- One light armoured division with M41 Walker Bulldogs (being withdrawn) and Stingray light tanks
- One field artillery division with two battalions of 105mm howitzers and one battalion of 155mm M109A5 self-propelled howitzers
- One air defence division with HAWK and Stinger air defence missile systems
- Eight independent infantry battalions (to be deployed at will)
- Three airmobile special forces companies at Lop Buri with dedicated helicopter support (possibly the Naresuan 261 Counter-Terrorism Unit)
- One Special Warfare Command with four special forces regiments

Thai Army divisions are organised along the triangular pattern, each comprising three battalions of three companies, with attached

RTA M60A3 tanks on exercise, this vehicle remains the most prolific of RTA tanks. (Thai Ministry of Defence) artillery, armour, and support services. The infantry companies usually have between 95 and 105 men, with three or four platoons, with the fourth platoon, if assigned, usually being a heavy weapons platoon. Each platoon has a small headquarters, with assigned specialists, and three squads of 10 to 12 men (depending upon the role). Each squad has up to two light machineguns and a grenade launcher, with the rest of the soldiers equipped with automatic rifles, usually either the Tavor or M16A4. The HK33 has largely been retired from frontline service but is still found in some groups. The second machine gun usually comes from the weapons platoon, which also includes anti-tank weapons and a battery of three 81mm mortars, if assigned.

Officers and some specialists carry a pistol, mostly a locally produced version of the M1911 Colt .45 ACP pistol known as the Type 86 (ปพ.86), or a 9mm Cz-75. The infantry are armed with M16-series rifles, being slowly replaced with the IMI Tavor Tar-21 which so far equips the 2nd Division, Queen Sirikit's Guard. Reserves and students are equipped with the Type-11 (ปลย 11), a license-built copy of the HK33 assault rifle, which is also used by a few territorial defence forces and the paramilitary Tahan Phran. The standard squad automatic machine gun is the Ultimax 100 from Singapore, now being replaced by the IMI Negev, whilst the special forces use the M249 SAW. The standard grenade launcher is the 40mm M203 if equipped with the M16-series or Tavor. LAW 66mm disposable anti-tank weapons are also issued to the squads.



Left to right, the 9mm CZ-75, .45 ACP Colt M1911, and the locally produced Colt clone, are the standard sidearms of the RTA. (Authors photo)

The standard anti-tank weapon is the BGM-71 TOW or the M47 Dragon. These equip the weapon companies' anti-tank platoons and can be attached to the infantry companies as required. RPG-7s equip the Tahan Phran (ทหารพราน) and some units of the Border Patrol Police (ตำรวจตระเวนชายแดน). These are being supplemented by Spike MR/LR missiles have been ordered from Israel and FGM-148 Javelin missiles from the USA.

The standard infantry vehicles are the imported US-made Humvee jeep and the German made Unimog 4x4 light truck; with the US series of M35 trucks providing heavier cargo capabilities, including fuel, water, and transportation, with hundreds having been gifted to the RTA during the Vietnam War. The M113A1 series of armoured personnel carrier provide the bulk of APCs for the cavalry formations alongside the Chinese-made Type-85. Ukrainian BTR-3E1s equip the Mobile Infantry Regiment, being built locally under license. Thailand has also acquired 60 refurbished M1126 Stryker APCs, with a further 60 on order. China has also provided 111 of their 6x6 ZBL-09/VN-1s in 2021. The 6x6 ZBL-09/VN-1s were intended to equip the following:

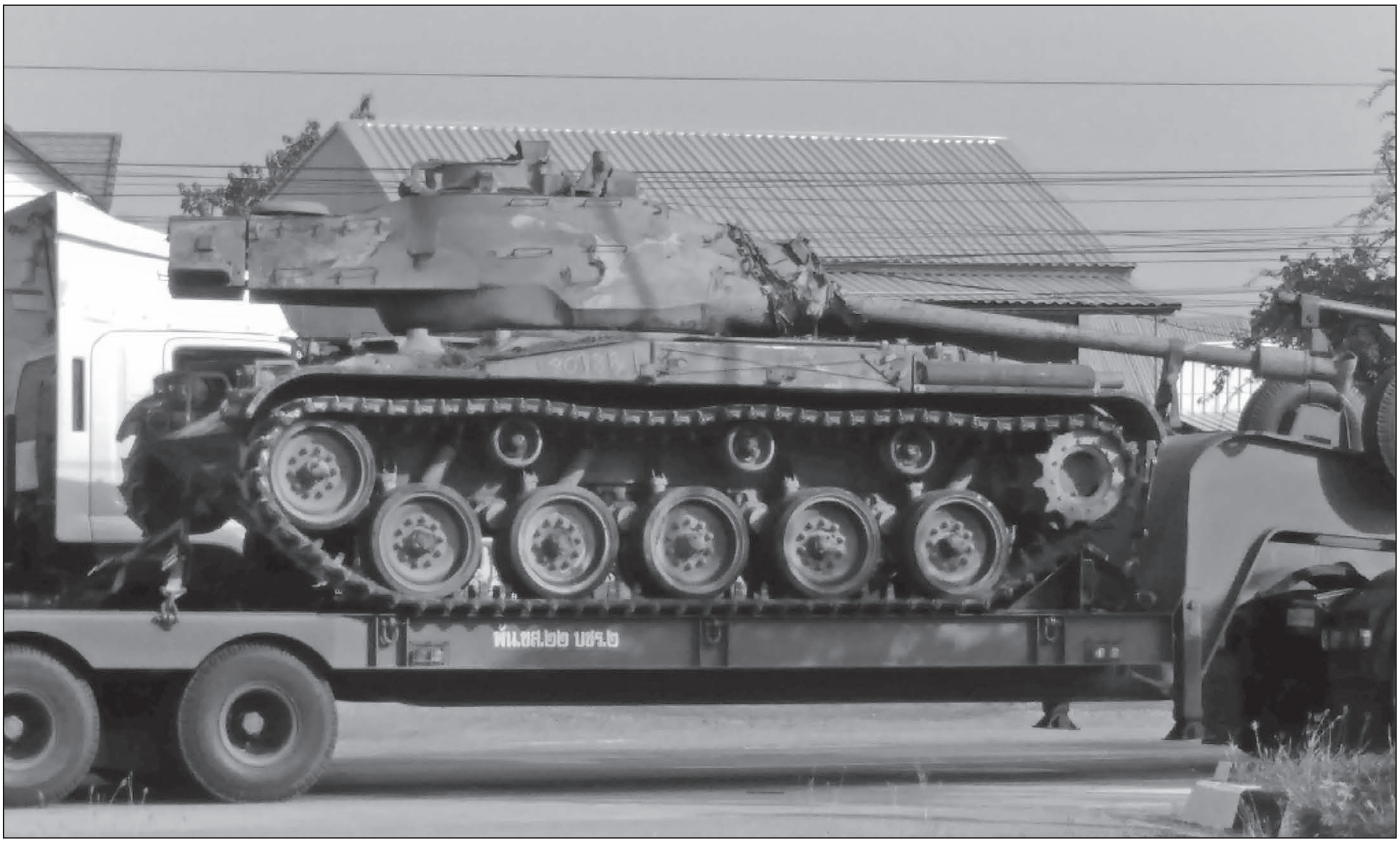
- 2nd Cavalry Battalion, Royal Guard; Fort Chakraphongse, Prachinburi
- 4th Cavalry Battalion, Royal Guard; Fort Kiakkai, Bangkok
- 8th Cavalry Battalion, Fort Sunari, Nakhorn Ratchasima, Khorat
- 9th Cavalry Battalion, Fort Ekathotarot, Phitsanulok

As of 2020 only 49 had been purchased and delivered, these equip only the 2nd Battalion – Royal Guard – with five platoons in three understrength companies; the remainder of the battalions are equipped with M60A3 and M48A1PI.

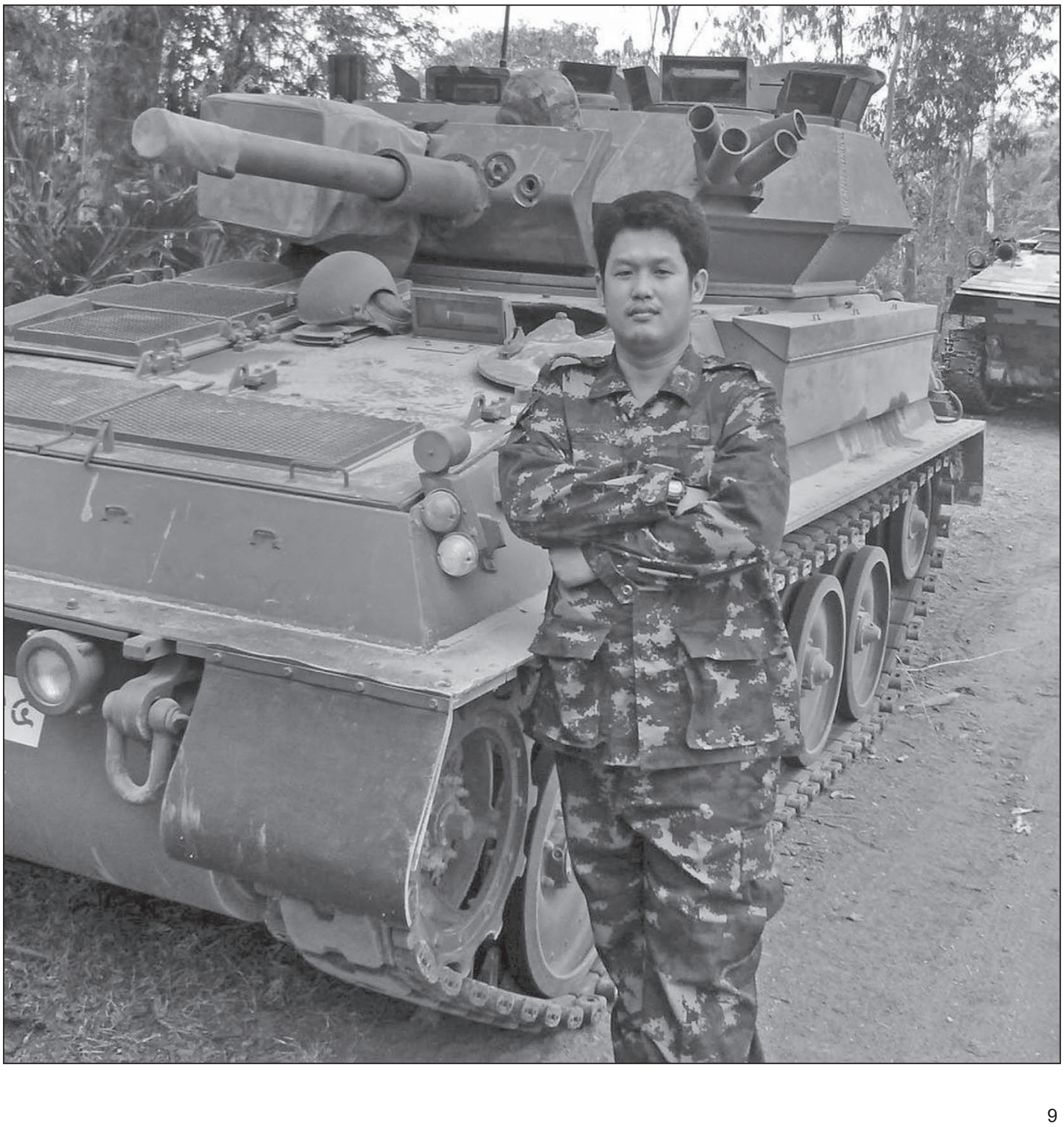
The most numerous tanks in RTA service are the M60 family, with 53 M60A1 RISE and 125 M60A3 TTS in service. From 2015 to 2016 some M60A3 TTS received Israeli upgrades to their electrical and electronic systems. It would seem that the RTA has also acquired 49 T-84 Oplot-T MBTs (a Ukrainian derivative of the T-80UD MBT), and 38 VT-4 MBTs from Norinco in the People's Republic of China.

The cavalry's aged M41 Walker Bulldog tanks seem to have been withdrawn from frontline service. The reconnaissance units are equipped with FV101 Scorpions and Humvees.

RTA soldiers from Queen Sirikit's DiviCrisis – armed with Israeli-made Tavor assault rifles – during the PAD protests on Silom Road, Bangkok, 2008. (Authors collection)



M41A3 Walker Bulldog of the 3rd Cavalry Division, 6th Regiment being withdrawn from service, May 2019. The M41 is a US light tank built in the early 1950s and widely exported to the allies of the US around the globe. (Authors photo)



FV101 Scorpion of the Royal Thai Army. The Scorpion is a British reconnaissance vehicle built by Alvis of Coventry armed with a 76mm gun and often used as a light tank. (Authors collection)

RTA M113 Armoured Cavalry Assault Vehicles (ACAVs) of the 3rd Cavalry, 3rd Infantry Division, Ft. Suranari, Nakhorn Ratchasima. (RTA official photo)

The most numerous artillery pieces in service with the RTA are 155 mm self-propelled guns (SPG) of various manufacturers including M109A5 from the USA. The ATMOS 2000 is a joint Thai/Israeli production of a truck mounted 155mm howitzer built under license locally and the most prolific 155mm SPG in the RTA's inventory with 38 currently in service. The M198 towed 155mm howitzer from the US is the most prolific towed 155mm artillery piece equipping the remainder of the formations. Other artillery units are also equipped with towed French LG 105mm guns manufactured by Giat, and from other suppliers. Several rocket propelled systems also exist including the locally manufactured DTI-1 a derivative of the Chinese WS-1 302mm rocket mounted on a Volvo chassis.

Anti-Aircraft assets of the RTA include 24 Thales Starstreak surface-to-air missile systems; 24 Vulcan VADS system on the M113 chassis as well as Bofors, Oerlikon and BAE EL/70 40mm towed guns.

RTA aviation assets comprises a fleet of Bell UH-1D helicopters, some airframes dating back to the initial supply by the US Army during the Vietnam War, as well as newer Bell 206 helicopters. In 2009 the RTA announced that it was in the process of acquiring several UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters with substantially more to follow; with three airframes being delivered in 2011.[2]

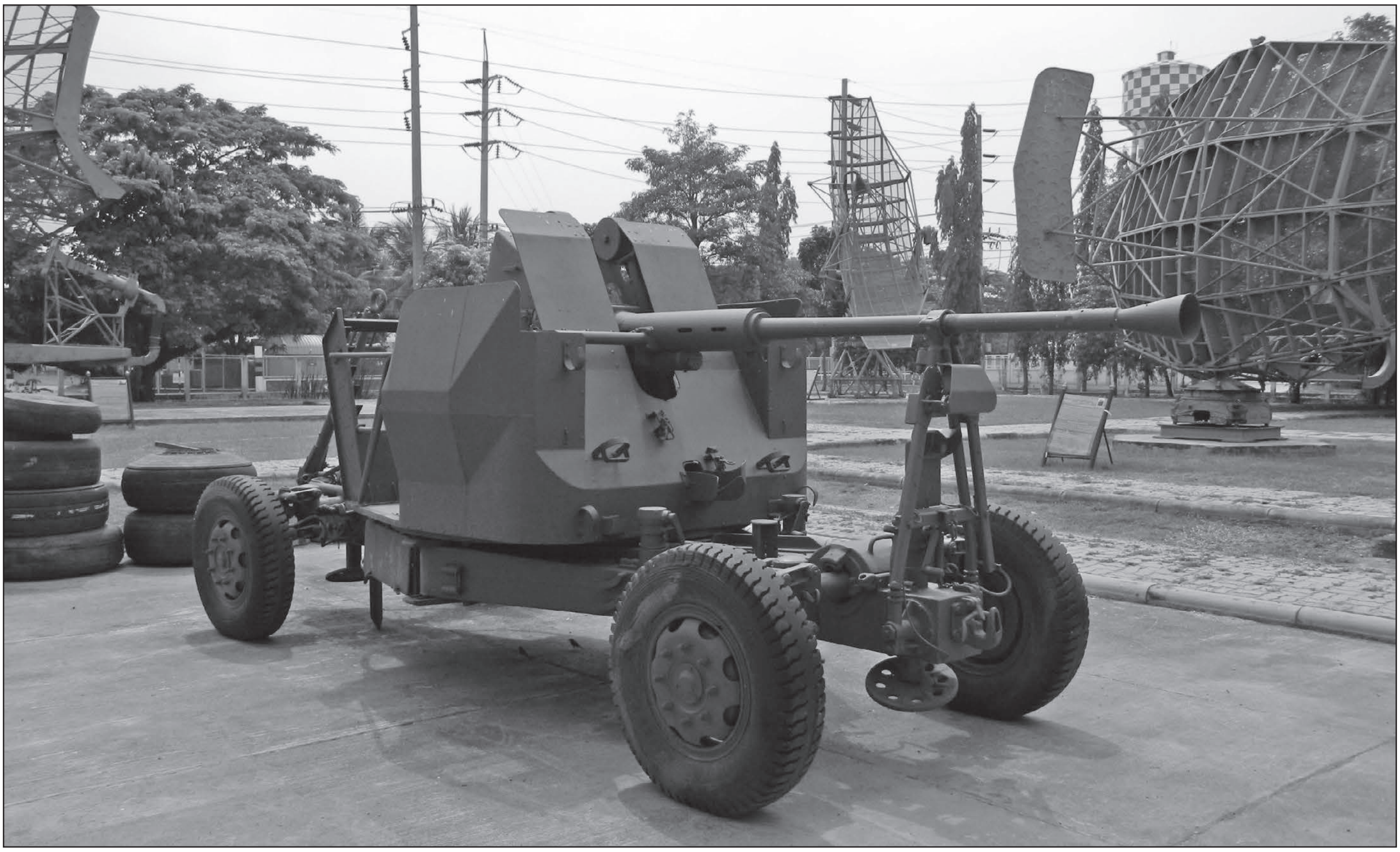
The 15th Infantry Division, dubbed a 'development division' was announced in January 2005 and came into effect shortly thereafter. Its primary mission was not fighting the Islamic militants in the south of the country but to provide reconstruction and development to the region, deployed as a permanent force with its primary mission the safety of the citizens and the reconstruction of the region.

Special Warfare Command

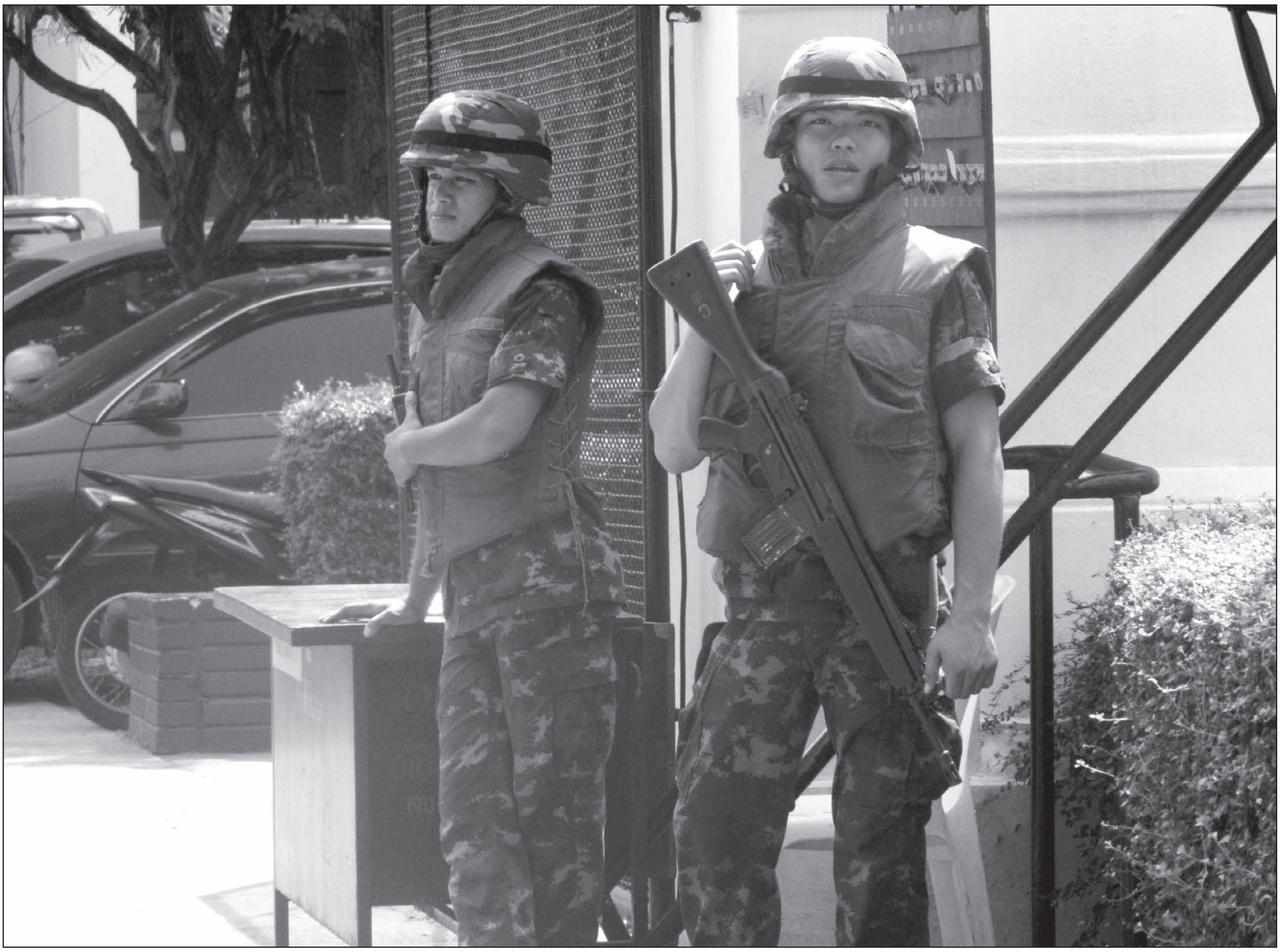
The Special Warfare Command (หน่วยบัญชาการสงครามพิเศษ) has its HQ in Thale Chup Sop, Mueng Lopburi, in northern Thailand. At the time of writing it is commanded by Lieutenant General Nattawut Nakanakorn.

In 1953 the RTA, with US Army advisors, established their airborne formation. They established a training school at Lop Buri, previously used by PARU (see below). Captain Tianchai Sirisumpan was sent as one of the first foreign trainees to the US Army Ranger School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Upon his return he was given command of the fledgling Royal Thai Army Airborne Ranger Unit. Later in the 1950s the Rangers, along with the BPP, conducted joint operations along the Malaysian border. The Rangers numbered 580 men in the early 1960s and were organised into 26 detachments. With the situation in SE Asia deteriorating the Rangers assisted the Royal Lao parachute battalions in refresher and continuation airborne and parachute training. By the mid-1960s the Rangers were expanded and renamed to the Special Forces Group (Airborne) with six companies, resuming the training of the Royal Lao Army as well as conducting counterinsurgency operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

By 1966 the Special Warfare Centre had been established by the RTA at Camp Narai, with the formation of the 1st and 2nd SF



Bofors 40mm anti-aircraft gun in service with the RTA and RTAF. (Author's photo)



RTA soldiers on guard duty outside the 1st Combat Engineers Battalion, Kings Guard Division, Bangkok. Note the body armour and the HK33 rifle marking these soldiers as second tier troops. (Author's photo)

Groups (Airborne) and support in the form of quartermaster, supply, signals, medical and transportation (using ex-US Army UH-1Ds). The SF continued to supply, train and assist the Royal Lao Army throughout the 1960s, with one team evading capture after their garrison fell to Pathet Lao guerrillas in 1968; the team being rescued after one week. The SF Group also provided members to the RTA's LRRP unit in Vietnam from 1969 to 1971. By 1972 the RTSF Group had expanded further with the addition of a 3rd SF Group.

Post-Vietnam War, the RTSF Group continued to provide training as well as being heavily involved in the training of Village Scouts and village militias. The SF also provided training and support during the 1980s to the anti-Khmer groups such as the National Sihanoukist Army and providing training and supporting cross-border operations with the Cambodian resistance groups until the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge. The RTSF did not usually get involved in Thai politics, but in the 1985 coup attempt they did dispatch 11 helicopter loads of troops to secure Bangkok. By 1989 Task Force 90 of the RTSF was handling counterterrorism operations.

Exchange training programmes have been routinely conducted between the RTSF Group and Australian SAS, US and South Korean SF, and the RTSF continues to provide instructors for the RTA's Ranger courses at the Infantry Training Centre, the Special Warfare School and the Cavalry School.

Table 1: Special Warfare Command (ศูนย์สงครามพิเศษ)

Special Warfare Command (ศูนย์สงครามพิเศษ) HQ Lop Buri	
Special Warfare School	
Basic Training Centre	
Ranger Training Centre	
Airborne Training Centre	
Special Forces Training Centre	
Psychological Operations Centre	
1st Special Forces Division (กองพลรบพิเศษที่1)	
1st (Airborne) Special Forces Regiment (กรมรบพิเศษที่1)	
1st SF (Airborne) Battalion 2nd SF (Airborne) Battalion	Each with one HQ & support coy, three infantry companies, one weapons company and one mortar platoon
2nd (Airborne) Special Forces Regiment (กรมรบพิเศษที่2)	
1st SF (Airborne) Battalion 2nd SF (Airborne) Battalion	Each with one HQ & support coy, three infantry companies, one weapons company and one mortar platoon
3rd (Airborne) Special Forces Regiment, Kings Guard (กรมรบพิเศษที่3 รักษาพระองค์)	
Ranger Battalion, Kings Guard (กองพันจู่โจม รักษาพระองค์), also known as the RTA Ranger Battalion	
1st, 2nd and 3rd Ranger companies	Each with one HQ & support team, three infantry platoons, one weapons section and one mortar section
Special Operations Battalion, Kings Guard, known as Task Force 90 (ฉก.90 กองพันปฏิบัติการพิเศษ รักษาพระองค์)	
1st SF (Airborne) Battalion 2nd SF (Airborne) Battalion	Each with one HQ & support coy, three infantry companies, one weapons company and one mortar platoon
4th (Airborne) Special Forces Regiment (กรมรบพิเศษที่4)	
1st SF (Airborne) Battalion 2nd SF (Airborne) Battalion	Each with one HQ & support coy, three infantry companies, one weapons company and one mortar platoon
5th (Airborne) Special Forces Regiment (กรมรบพิเศษที่5)	
1st SF (Airborne) Battalion 2nd SF (Airborne) Battalion	Each with one HQ & support coy, three infantry companies, one weapons company and one mortar platoon
Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Company, SF Division	
LRRP Battalion	with an unknown number of companies
Psychological Warfare Battalion	
Quartermasters Aerial Supply Company	
35th Signals Battalion	
31st Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 31 รักษาพระองค์) also known as the Rapid Deployment Force (แรงปรับใช้อย่างรวดเร็ว)	
1st Battalion, 31st Regiment	1st, 2nd and 3rd Infantry companies, each with one HQ & support team, three infantry platoons, and one weapons platoon

UH-1D of the Special Forces Division, one of the SF regiments, Lop Buri, Thailand. (Authors collection)

The Royal Thai Army Air Division

Each RTA Army Area has an attached Royal Thai Army Aviation Centre (กองบินทหารบกไทย), with detachments at each regional and international airport. The responsibility of the RTA Air Division is the operation and maintenance of the rotary air assets of the RTA.

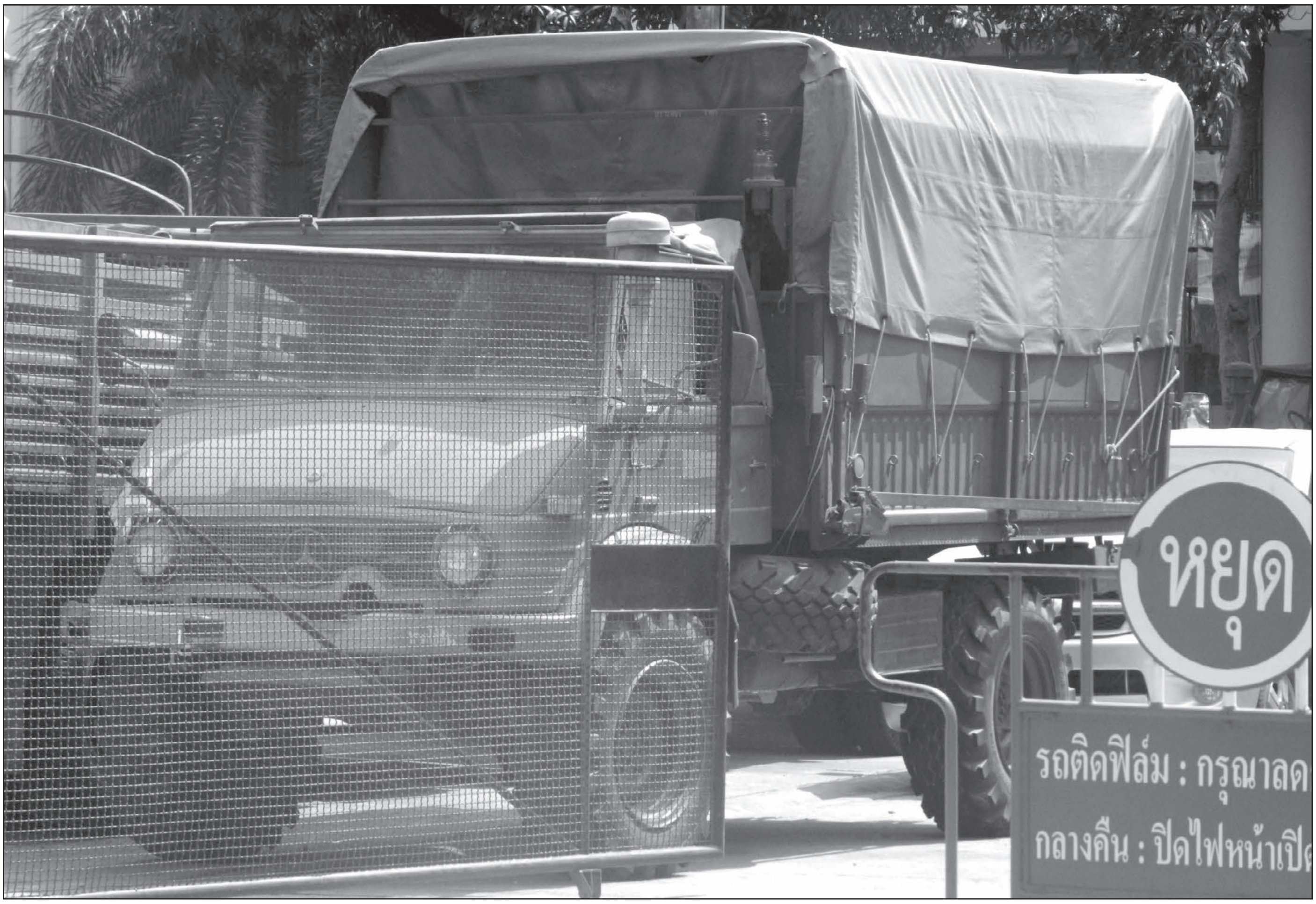
Table 2: Royal Thai Army Air Division

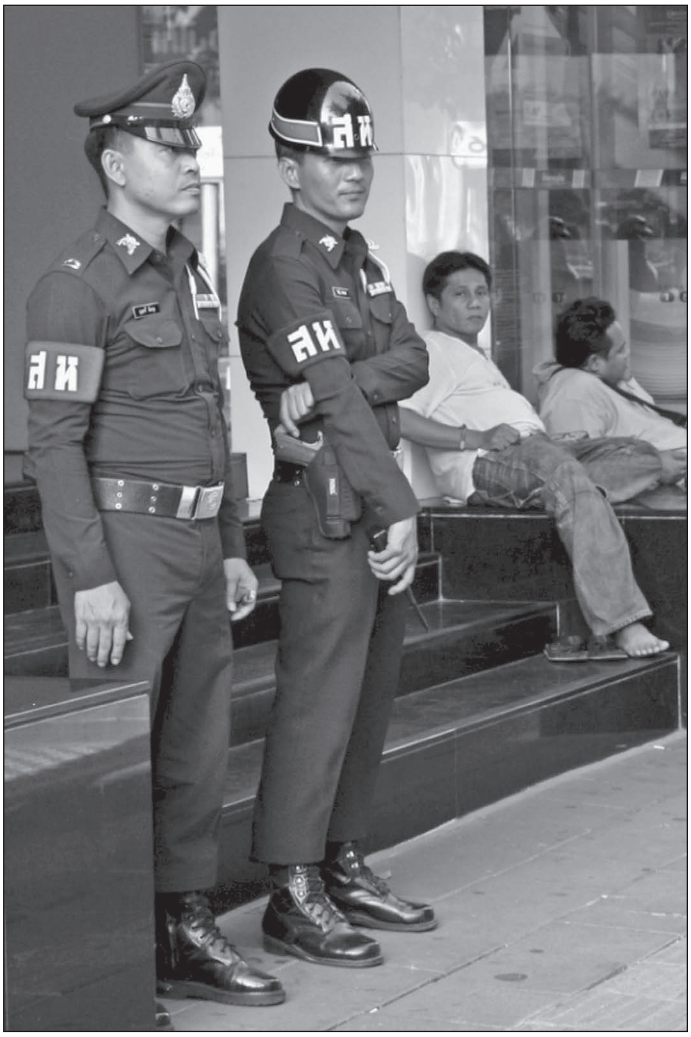
Royal Thai Army Air Division Don Mueang international Airport (ท่าอากาศยานดอนเมือง)	
VIP Squadron	2 x Embraer ERJ-135L 2 x Jetstream 41 2 x Casa 212-300 2 x Beech 1900-c1
1st Infantry Battalion (Aviation Assets)	2 x Bell 206B 3 x Schweitzer S-3000 2 x Cessna U17B Forward Air Control (FAC) AC
Bang Khen Airfield (บางเขน)	
Royal Squadron	3 x Bell 212 2 x Bell 412
Special Transport Squadron, 11th Infantry Division	10–12 x Bell 212 2 x Bell 206
Fort Surasi, Kanchanaburi, 9th Infantry Division (กองพลทหารราบที่ 9)	
	2 x Bell 212 3 x Schweitzer S-3000c
Air Mobility Detachment from 19th Cavalry Squadron (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 19)	
	Unknown quantity of UH-1H
Fort Chakraphong, Prachinburi	
2nd Infantry Division, Queen Sirikit's Guard	3 x Schweizer S-3000c 2 x Bell 206B
Phitsanulok Airport (ท่าอากาศยานพิษณุโลก)	
4th Infantry Division Aviation Assets	2–3 x Schweitzer S-3000c 2 x Bell 206B 2 x Cessna U-17B FAC
Fort Suranari, Nakhorn Ratchasima (ท้าวสุรนารี)	
3rd Infantry Division Aviation Assets	2 x Bell 206B 2 x Schweitzer S-3000c 2 x Cessna U-17B FAC
Airmobility company with an unspecified quantity of Bell 212	
Fort Princess Srinagarindra – Lop Buri; HQ RTA Aviation	
Aviation Training School	
Technical School	
Aircraft Maintenance Unit	
Light Aviation Company (กองพันการบิน)	?? x Cessna U17B FAC ?? x Cessna T-41 ?? x Searcher Mk II
1st Air Mobility Company (กองบินที่ 1)	?? x Bell UH-1H ?? x Bell 212
2nd Air Mobility Company (กองบินที่ 2)	?? x Bell UH-1H ?? x Bell 212
3rd Air Mobility Company (กองบินที่ 3)	Transport Wing: ?? x Bell UH-1H ?? x Bell 206B Attack Wing: 8 x Bell AH-1F Cobras ?? x Bell 212
9th Air Mobility Company (กองบินที่ 9)	?? x Bell UH-1H, 6 x S-70-43 Blackhawks (+6 more on order)
General Support Aviation Battalion	?? x Boeing CH-47D Chinook ?? x Bell UH-1H 8 x Mil-Mi-17v5
	2 x VIP Beechcraft 200 KingAir are also based here, but their role and assignment are unknown
5th Aircraft Maintenance Company (กองบินที่ 5), Sa Pran Nak	

Army Medical Department

The Army Medical Department, AMED (กรมแพทย์ทหารบก) is responsible for medical affairs, providing training to personnel in medical research and agriculture supervision. It provides the RTA with medical services in the field as part of the Service Regiments within the divisions and operates hospitals within the forts and at base facilities. AMED operates the Phramongkutklao Army Hospital in Bangkok and the Ananda Mahidol Hospital in Lop Buri. Army medical personnel and Combat Medics are trained at the Phramongkutklao College of Medicine, Bangkok. Combat medics and field hospitals operate Humvee ambulances alongside civilian-style ambulances with the name of the hospital written upon them. Care is slightly better in army hospitals than comparative non-private Thai hospitals and many civilians elect to go to hospitals maintained by the RTA.

An RTA medical department Humvee attached to the RTA Public Security Support Team, Bangkok, 2006. (Author's photo)


หยุด
รถติดฟิล์ม : กรุณาลด
กลางคืน : ปิดไฟหน้าเปิ



(Above) An RTA Unimog truck of the 3rd Combat Engineers Battalion, Kings Guard; Bangkok, Thailand, 2008. (Author's photo)

(Left) RTA Military Police guarding downtown banks in Bangkok during the PAD protests. (courtesy nationandking)

CHAPTER 2

THE ROYAL THAI POLICE

The Royal Thai Police (ตำรวจแห่งชาติ) (RTP) is the national police force of Thailand with approximately 230,000 personnel and is recognised as the fourth branch of the armed forces. RTP officers have to first graduate from the Armed Forces Academy Preparatory School before transferring across to the Royal Thai Police Cadet Academy. Training undergone by all officers and junior ranks is the same as for the army, but with an additional focus on law enforcement.

Until the 1900s the Royal Thai Army had, amongst its other duties of defencing the King and nation, the duty to provide policing, after which the Urban and Provincial Police Forces were formed as a separate entity to the Army. The Royal Police Cadet Academy was formed to train future police officers and by the end of the First World War the two regional forces were merged into the Thailand National Police Department (TNPD) as a subdivision under the direction of the Ministry of the Interior with the mandate to enforce the kingdom's laws, and in times of war falling under the Ministry of Defence. It was originally modelled on the lines of the National Police Force of Japan of pre-Second World War, and subsequently reorganised several times in order to meet the changing role of urban and rural policing. At the conclusion of the Second World War new equipment and training was provided by the Americans through to the 1970s, introducing new policing concepts and procedures which greatly modernised the TNPD.

The TNPD was administered out of their headquarters in Bangkok which also provided technical support (such as fingerprinting and police databases). The TNPD comprised the Metropolitan Police, Provincial Police (any police outside of the greater Bangkok metropolis), the smaller Central Investigation Bureaux as well as the Border Patrol Police. By the mid-1980s the total number of officers numbered just over 100,000; with over half assigned to the Provincial Police, 40,000 to the Border Police and 10,000 to the Metropolitan Police. The TNPD was quasi-military in its structure and character with a police general in charge, assisted by eight police lieutenant generals, with all ranks – apart from constable, the lowest – equivalent to Royal Thai Army ranks. In 1998 the TNPD was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Office of the Prime Minister and was renamed the Royal Thai Police.

As of 2020 the RTP numbered around 230,000 officers, with around 18,500 being female. Females have been admitted to the Royal Police Cadet Academy (RPCA) since 2009, but a new Ministry of Defence decree that all cadets must first undergo training at the all-male Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School means that females have since 2019 been barred from entry to the RTP unless via other avenues, such as having a law degree, although such females will be actively recruited. The usual 280 spaces reserved for female officers at the RPCA have been scrapped.

ตำรวจภูธรจังหวัดปัตตานี
สถานีตำรวจภูธรเมืองปัตตานี

Police General Pateep Tanprasert (at left), deputy commander-in-chief RTP and his team are greeted by Police Major General Pichet Setthaphan, the Pattani Chief of Police after an explosion injured several RTP outside a station. (RTP official photo, author's collection)

RTP Female officers graduating from the RTP training college. (Khasod English)

Organisation of the Royal Thai Police

The Headquarters of the RTP is in Bangkok, and Bangkok also provides all of the administrative, training, and technical support for the RTP. A Police General is in overall charge of the RTP with three Deputy Director Generals (Police Lieutenant Generals) and five Assistant Deputy Director Generals with the same rank. The RTP is organised into several services and several regions.

Table 3: Royal Thai Police

Royal Thai Police Headquarters	Bangkok; administrative HQ of the entire RTP including provincial and metropolitan and divisions.
Director-General of Police Offices	Bangkok; provides administrative support to the Police General.
Office of Logistics	Headquarters in Bangkok, maintains all of the logistical apparatus, servicing, and maintenance of the RTP's vehicles and aircraft.
Criminal Records Office	Headquarters in Bangkok and part of the CIB. The CRO maintains records of police work including dossiers and the fingerprint database of known criminals, and runs and maintains Thailand's Police National Computer and Criminal Database.
Special Branch	Headquarters in Bangkok, RTP SB is set up like and modelled on Scotland Yard's Special Branch.
Office of the Immigration Bureau	Headquarters in Bangkok as well as having satellite branches throughout the country in major tourist areas. The Immigration Bureau provides the staff at the border crossings, regulates the different classes of visa, and chases up over-stayers within the kingdom and applies fines and penalties as required.
Narcotics Suppression Division	Headquarters in Bangkok, this division provides officers and specialised units for the prevention, apprehension, and prosecution of narcotics traffickers, and intelligence working in close cooperation with outside agencies such as the US Drug Enforcement Administration.
Office of the Royal Court Security Police	Headquarters in Bangkok, this unit provides close protection and convoy protection to members of the Royal Court.
Crown Prince's Royal Protective Unit Dechochai Knight 3	Provides close protection and convoy protection to the Crown Prince.
Crown Princess's Royal Protection Unit	Provides close protection and convoy protection to the Crown Princess.
Aviation Division	Tasked with maintaining the RTP's fleet of rotary and fixed-wing aircraft.
Sea and Air Rescue Unit	Provides search and rescue capabilities for offshore and inshore of the kingdom.
Provincial Police Division	Responsible for law enforcement outside of the Bangkok Metropolitan Area and throughout Thailand's provinces.
Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory	Headquarter ins Bangkok and the technicians employed within perform the chemical and physical analyses and forensic investigations and analyses for major cases within the metropolitan area and nationwide.
Licensing Division	Headquarters in Bangkok, the division provides databases on the licensing of vehicles, firearms and other enterprises as required by Thai Law such as gambling and alcohol licenses.
Tourist Police	Headquarters in Bangkok with offices through Thailand, the Tourist Police handle complaints, theft report forms and statement of losses for tourists as well as provide a go-between for the tourist and the RTP. The Tourist Police are recruiting foreigners to their forces to assist.
Council Police	Headquarters in Bangkok, these officers who have distinctive liveried vehicles handle markets, licensing, weights and measures as well as pitches and dues as requested by the local council. They fall under control of the RTP, but are not RTP.

Tourist Police Officers: a sergeant major and captain with a Toyota patrol car outside the Royal Palace and Temple of the Emerald Buddha, 2008. (Author's photo)

Council Police with distinctive uniform and green liveried vehicles, provide licensing and police stall holders in markets. (Author's photographs)

RTP Central Investigation Bureau

With its headquarters in Bangkok, the CIB has jurisdiction over the entirety of Thailand with a remit to prevent and minimalise threats to the national security of Thailand and provide technical assistance to the RTP as well as training and technical support in detecting and preventing criminal activity and national threats. The CIB comprises several subdivisions including the Railroad Police, the Maritime Police, Highway Police (in their distinctive brown and yellow vehicles); economic and forestry police (sometimes referred to as the Land Police). There are several other divisions within the CIB, the largest being the Crime Suppression Division.

RTP Crime Suppression Division (กองบังคับการปราบปราม)

The largest subdivision of the CIB, the Crime Suppression Division (headquartered in Bangkok) provides technical equipment, officers, support and training to detect and prevent narcotics trafficking, gambling, threats to national security secrets, sabotage and the suppression of Triads and Mafia elements within the borders of Thailand as well as any offences involving politicians and voter fraud/election fraud. The CSD is responsible for the technical investigation of most of the criminal offences throughout Thailand. The emergency unit of the CSD provides officers and training in riots, public disorder, preventing sabotage and national emergencies.

RTP Special Branch Bureau (SBB) (กองบัญชาการตำรวจสันติบาล)

The SBB was formed in 1932 after a royal decree and given autonomy over the investigation and intelligence gathering of threats to and within the borders of the kingdom and the royal family. The SBB is divided into four divisions and is the major intelligence organisation for the RTP.

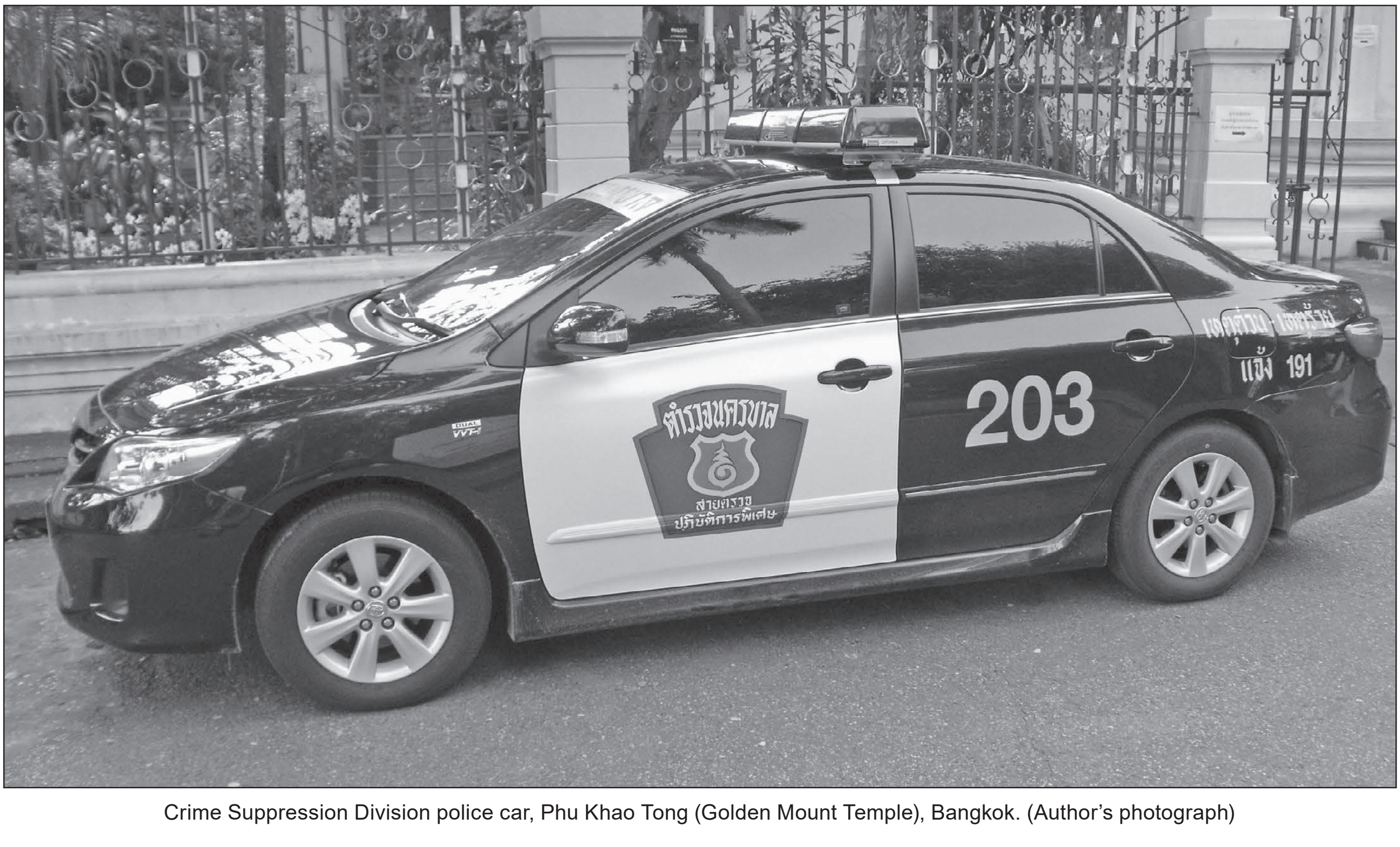
The SBB is part of the Royal Thai Police Crime Prevention and Suppression Group with a remit to investigate and prevent any security threats to the kingdom. The SBB also deal with citizenship matters such as renunciation of citizenship, and foreign nationals report to the SBB for their Thai police clearance in matters of residency and immigration visas and rules. The SBB also gathers intelligence, analyses it and disseminates security briefings on any threats to the kingdom within and without its borders. The Black Tigers unit alongside the Bangkok Metropolitan Police Bureau and the Armed Forces Security Centre, provides close and convoy protection to VIPs.

During the Cold War the SBB worked closely with the Malaysian Special Branch and there were allegations of collaboration in the extra-judicial killings of alleged communist supporters. The SBB was also subject to allegations in 2007 when it was revealed it had conducted its own poll as to the likely outcome of the election: since then the SBB has characterised its gatherings as data studies rather than polls. The Special Branch Bureau aided the RTP during the Red Shirt/Yellow Shirt protests including intelligence, monitoring and surveillance of the leaders and those associated with them. The SBB also provided logistical backup and data gathering via drone footage and other monitoring activities as well as maintaining databases.

The SBB Organisation

- General Staff Division SBB: headquarters company and support
- Special Branch Division 1
- Special Branch Division 2
- Special Branch Division 3
- Special Branch Division 4
- Intelligence Development Centre

It is believed the SB Divisions follow the same territorial areas as the RTA.



Crime Suppression Division police car, Phu Khao Tong (Golden Mount Temple), Bangkok. (Author's photograph)

POLICE
POLICE
05827

Police Special Branch car, Bangkok. (RTP official photo)

Patrol and Special Operations Division Arintaraj 26 SWAT

Anti-Terrorism Sub-Division Arintaraj 26 is a counterterrorism and hostage rescue team, loosely based on a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, with its headquarters at Lak Si district, Bangkok. Arintaraj 26 comes under the umbrella of the RTP Special Branch Bureau with a remit to conduct operations within Bangkok and nationwide. The squad specialises in hostage rescue, serving high profile arrest warrants, dealing with barricaded suspects using explosive breaches and stealth entry, engaging heavily armed criminals and other duties performed by SWAT units.

In 1977, with various incidents of unrest rocking Thailand, then Police Colonel Chumpon Attasat established what he called the Anti-Hijacking unit as part of his Riot Control and Suppression Division. With zero funding the officers were selected on their mental and physical abilities and volunteered for the unit. A domestic terrorism upsurge in 1983 resulted in calls for resurrection of the unit, and Police Major General Thip Asawarak the then commanding officer of the Patrol and Special Operations Division re-established the Anti-Hijacking unit; this time securing funding and having a plan to model it upon Germany's GSG-9: it was incorporated into the Metropolitan Police Bureau and renamed Arintaraj 26.

Training and Organisation of Arintaraj 26

Members of the RTP with a minimum of two years of service and those freshmen who have just graduated from the Police Academy, or the Police Cadet Academy can apply for selection. Needing to pass the medical, physical fitness tests that include running 1.6km, a 100m swim, push-ups and an obstacle course, once accepted they have an 18-week course including eight weeks of basic training and then a further 10 weeks of specialist training such as method of entry, fast rope and rappelling, hostage rescue techniques, unarmed combat, weapons, and explosives handling. Only 30 percent of recruits undergoing training selection pass and join the unit. Training never ceases, with further training involving close cooperation with other units such as the Royal Thai Navy SEALS, Royal Thai Air Force Security Force Regiment, 90th Task Force and Naresuan 261 (described later in this book).

The unit is loosely organised into teams of eight men, with supporting units of sniper-qualified officers, breach specialists, medics, and explosives officers. The unit uses Glock handguns, HK MP-5 sub machine guns, M16 assault rifles, M4A1s with ACOG sights, Remington 870 breaching shotguns, stun grenades and sniper rifles such as the HK PSG1 and Remington M24. They have the full range of body armour, riot shields, ballistic shields, breaching tools and armoured vehicles and vehicle-borne ladders.

Arintaraj 26 officers flying a counterterrorism operation in an undisclosed location in Thailand. (Arintaraj 26 official photo)

Table 4: Major Operations undertaken by Arintaraj 26

1–2 October 1999	Myanmar Embassy siege, Bangkok
24–25 January 2000	Ratchaburi Hospital siege, Ratchaburi Province
22–23 November 2000	Hostages released from Karen-Burmese rebellion in Samut, Sakhon Province prison
25 March 2019	Suspect apprehended after barricading himself in a house after killing six people in Pathum Thani
8–9 February 2020	Nakhorn Ratchasima Terminal-21 shootings and siege, Nakhorn Ratchasima City, Khorat Province

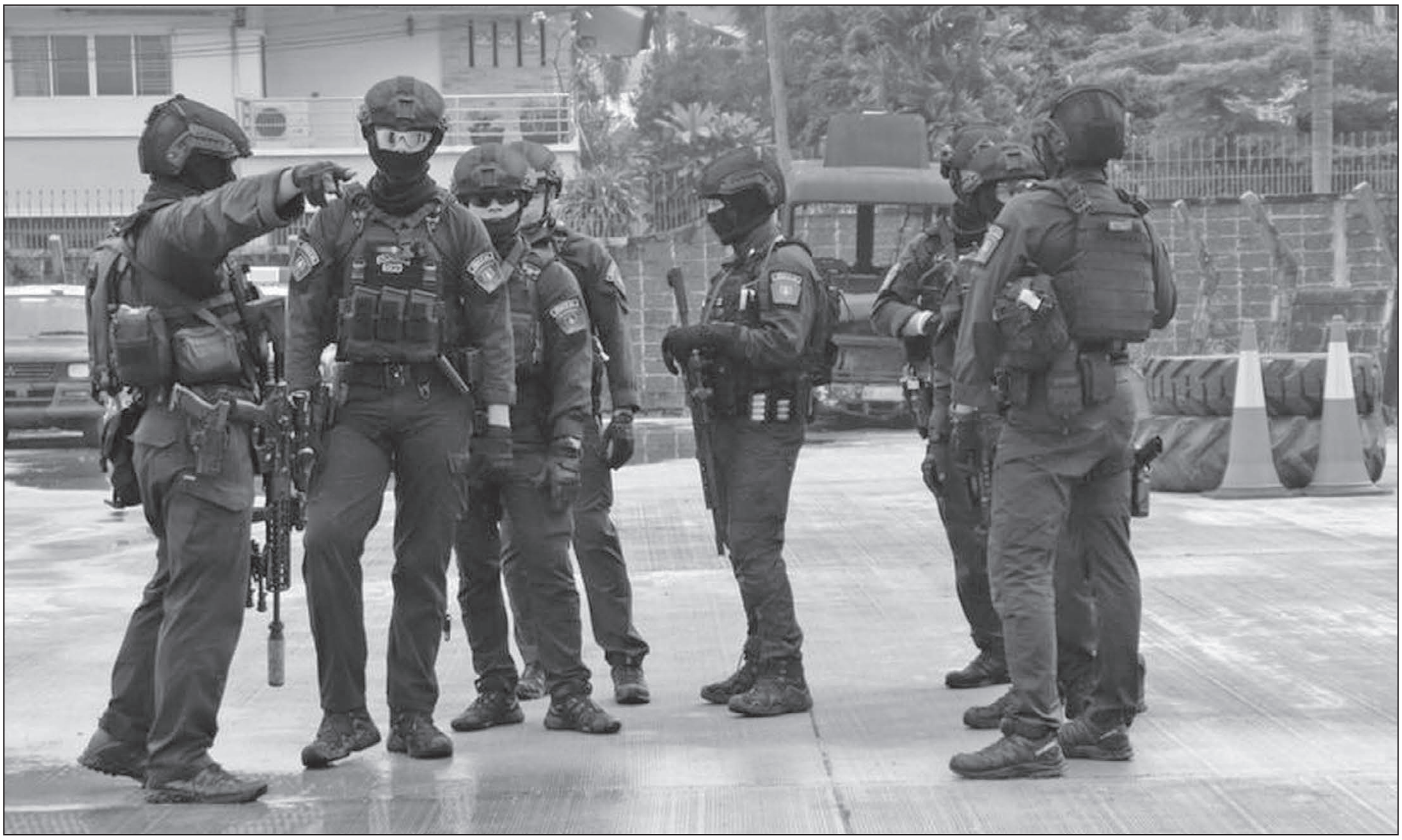
On 25 March 2019, local police General T T Samran Nuanma requested the support of Arintaraj 26 in an operation against a suspect who had shot dead six people before barricading himself into a house and shooting at the surrounding police in Pathum Thani. The 2nd Company of Arintaraj 26 was given operational control and made plans to enter the house. Officers breached the main door and entered finding the suspect on the second floor where he fired on the officers and was shot in return. Officers arrested him and transferred him to a nearby hospital for treatment. No Police were injured in the operation.

At 3.30pm on 8 February 2020, 39-year-old RTA Sergeant Major Jakrapanth Thomma confronted his commanding officer, Colonel Anantharot Krasae, at his residence over a parcel of land. Anantharot pulled a gun, and there was a struggle in which Jakrapanth took Anantharot's gun, shooting him and his mother-in-law dead. He then drove to the Suratham Phithak Military Base where he was stationed. At the base he arrived at the armoury and shot dead the armoury soldier before taking two Type-11 assault rifles, an M60 machinegun, and a large quantity of ammunition (some sources state over 770 rounds). Outside he took an armed Humvee after wounding the driver, before driving off the camp, shooting and wounding two police officers and two civilians before shooting into the street. He opened fire on traffic with the M60, stopping outside the Wat Pa Sattha Ruam temple, killing eight civilians and one police officer. He then proceeded to drive on to the Terminal-21 shopping mall within Nakhorn Ratchasima city itself where he abandoned the Humvee and the M60 but retained a rifle and pistol before proceeded on foot. Shooting indiscriminately at civilians, he killed 12 before entering the mall where he took 16 hostages, all the time live streaming on Facebook, at one point stating he was tired and his fingers hurt. RTP and soldiers surrounded the mall and contained him on the fourth floor before Arintaraj 26 arrived and took control of the situation, along with Naresuan 261. Officers entered the mall and demanded that he surrender; a gunfight ensued killing two police officers, one of whom was a member of Arintaraj 26, wounding three others and also killing a soldier. A standoff followed for several hours until the early hours of the 9th when a sniper team from Arintaraj 26 neutralised him with one shot as he threatened to execute hostages. In all, 29 civilians, police and soldiers were killed and 58 wounded. The Nakhorn Ratchasima shootings were the biggest and worst mass shooting in Thailand.

The Special Service Division (กองบังคับการปฏิบัติการพิเศษ)

The Special Service Division was formed in 2018 with a compliment of 1,600 officers and the task of protecting the monarchy and members of the royal family, and to collect, monitor and investigate individuals who pose a threat to national security and His Majesty the King. This involves data collection, collecting reports, monitoring subversives and subversive groups and maintaining a database of those who do, or could, pose a threat to the royal family. The unit's mandate was changed in 2020 to include counterterrorism, riot control, bomb disposal (EOD) around the royal residences and palace complexes.

Officers from Bravo Company Arintaraj 26, preparing to breach the barricaded suspect's house, Phatum Thani. (Arintaraj 26 official photo)



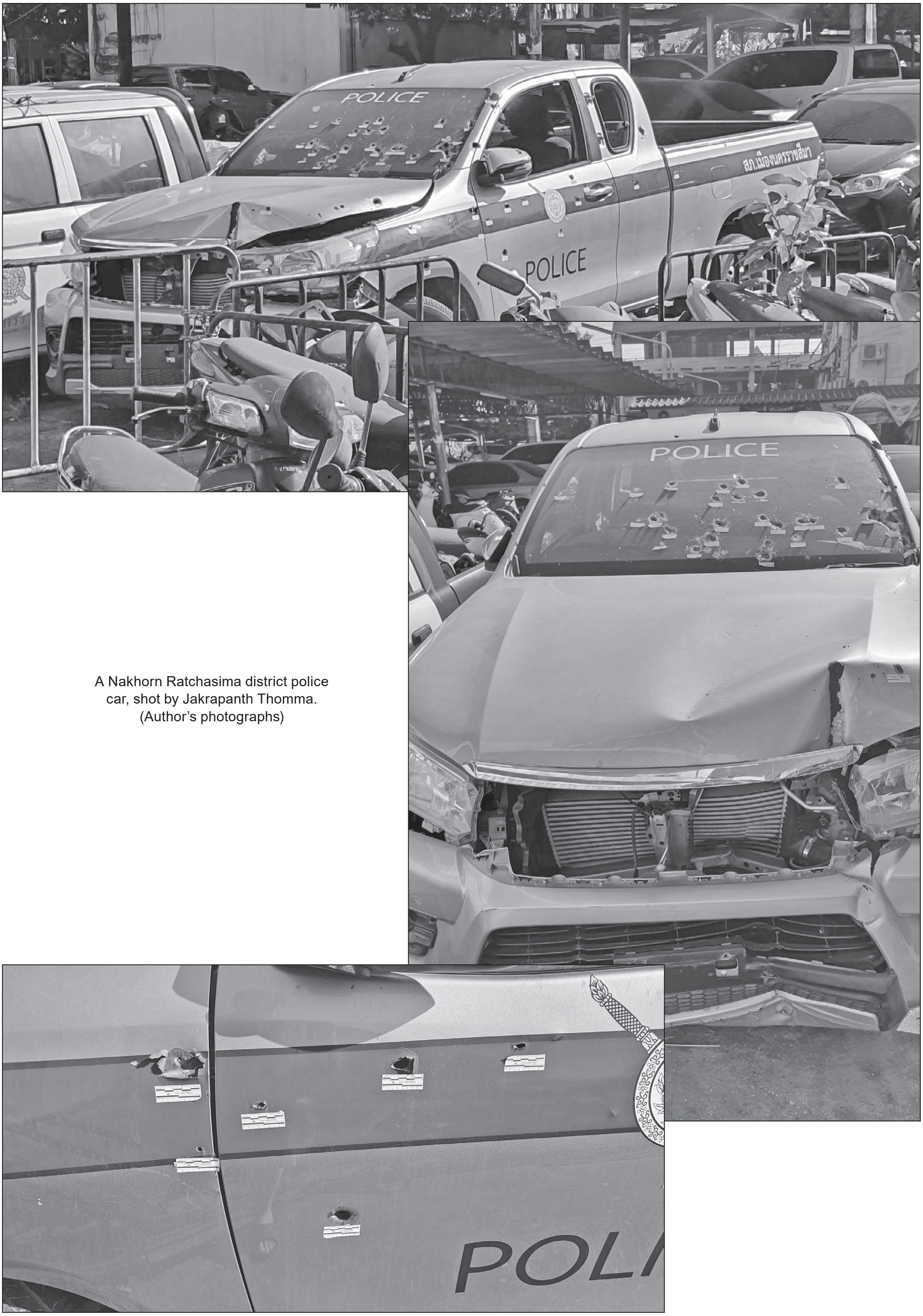
Alpha Company officers of Arintaraj 26 outside of Nakhorn Ratchasima's Terminal-21 shopping mall. Note the use of tactical vests, body armour and helmets. The weapons are M4A3 carbines. (Arintaraj 26 official photo, author's collection)

Metropolitan Police Division (Bangkok Metropolitan Area)

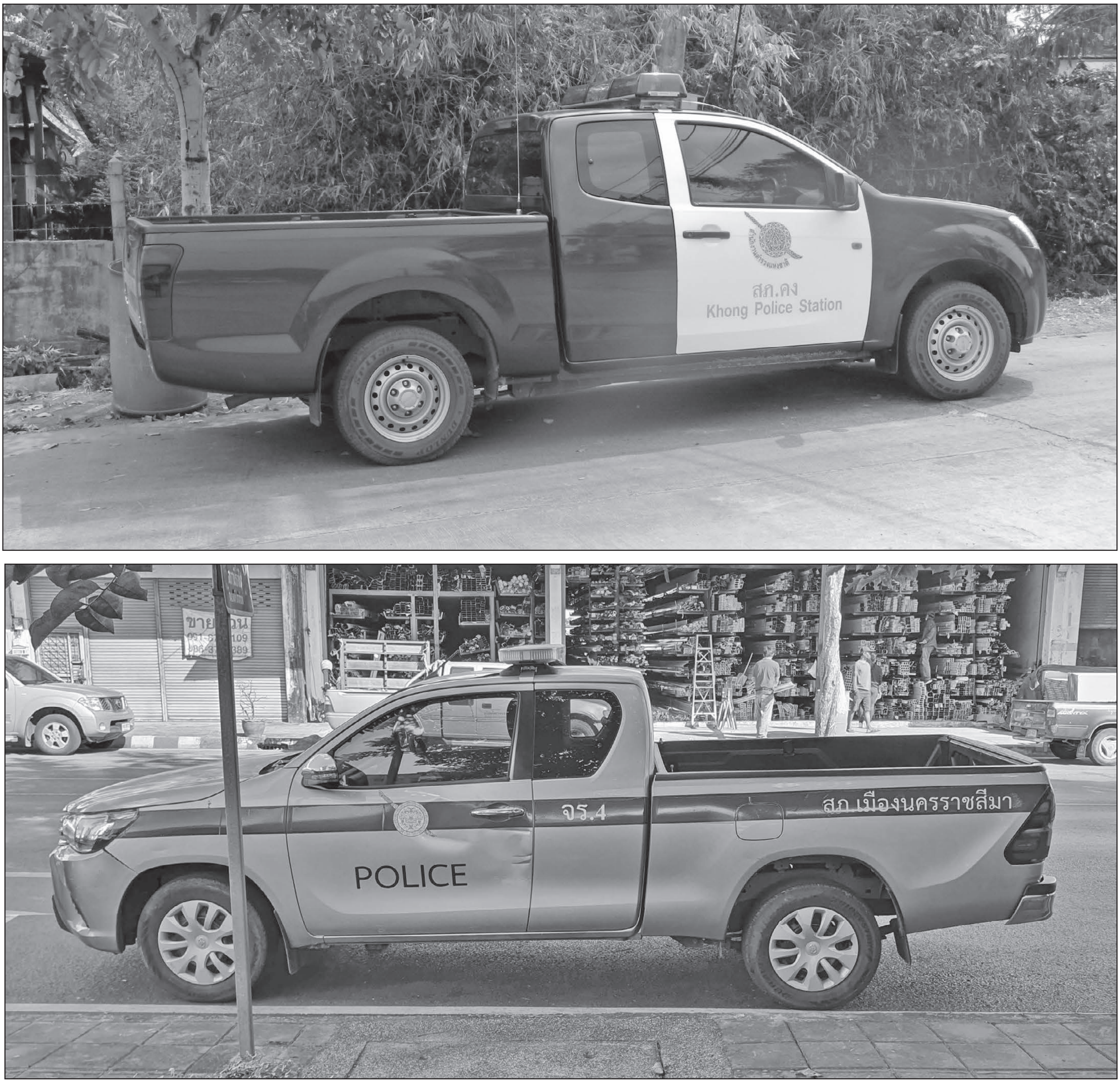
This is the largest uniformed force in Thailand, consisting of three divisions covering the entirety of the Bangkok Metropolitan Division; Northern Bangkok, Southern Bangkok and Thon Buri with over 40 police precincts providing around the clock mobile and foot patrol officers alongside specialised units such as canine units (K9) and building guards for the banks and numerous gold shops.

Royal Thai Police Provincial Police Divisions

Thailand is divided into *tambon* (ตำบล), below a district *amphoe* (อำเภอ), and a province *changwat* (จังหวัด). There are 75 *changwat* and one special administrative area (Bangkok Metropolitan Area). *Tambon* (loosely township or subdistrict) are divided into around 10 *Ban* (บ้าน) (villages) with eight to 10 *tambon* per *amphoe*. This regional organisation is headed by various chiefs and appointed personnel from the Ministry of the Interior.


POLICE
สภ.เมืองนครราชสีมา
POLICE
POLICE
POLI

A Nakhorn Ratchasima district police car, shot by Jakrapanth Thomma. (Author’s photographs)



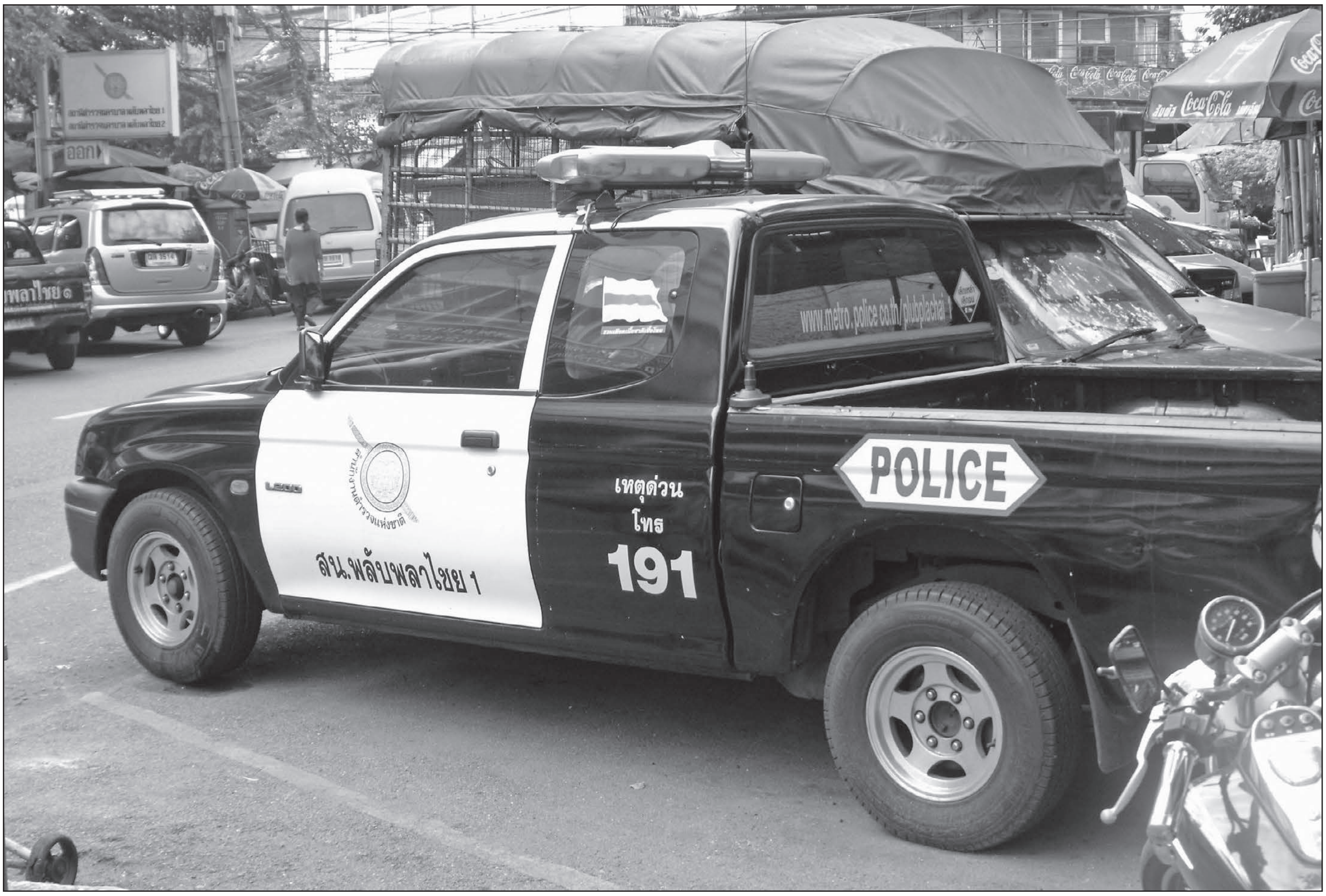
Provincial RTP police car in maroon and white livery, and the replacement scheme, silver and maroon livery post-2018. (Author's photographs)

The RTP Provincial Police form the largest component of the RTP, providing law enforcement and detective capabilities for the nation at large outside of the Bangkok Metropolitan Division. Administered through four regions (equivalent to the four army Administrative Regions) the RPPD provide around the clock policing to the rural regions and cities of Thailand and increasingly, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, provided a counterterrorist response force. After noticing that there was a distinctive lack of coordination of Police assets, the RTP was reorganised in 1978 giving each Police Province more authority.

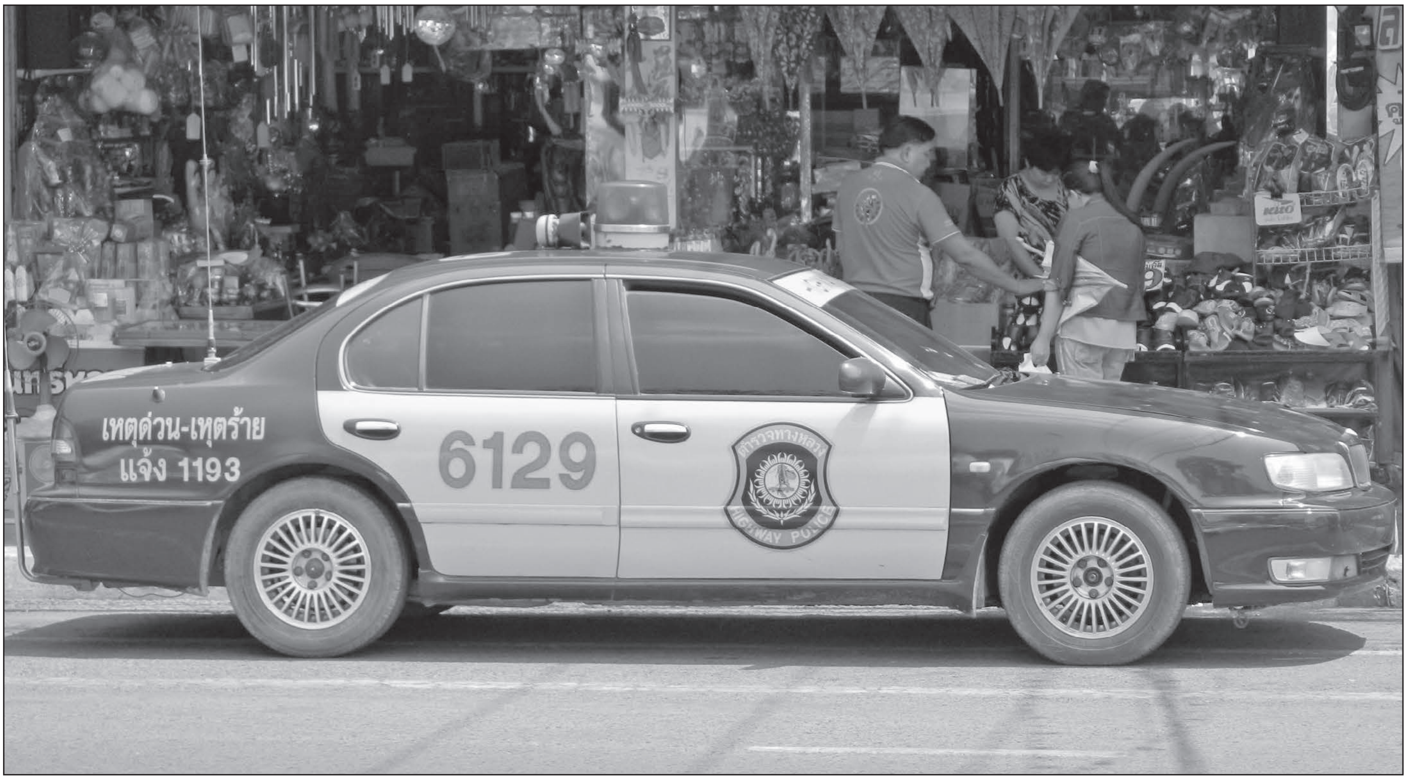
The senior officers in each region not only control their local police assets such as the police units assigned to their geographical area, but also direct the Railroad, Highway, Mountain, Forrest, and Marine Police units operating (or assigned) in their area without having to go through the chain of command of each unit in Bangkok. This provides an additional workload for each Regional Police Commander but results in better communications, increased efficiency and overall improved law enforcement response.

The Royal Thai Police is organised into nine regions covering the 75 provinces of Thailand (excluding the Bangkok Metropolitan Division and the Borders):

- **Region 1:** Ayutthaya
- **Region 2:** Chonburi
- **Region 3:** Nakhorn Ratchasima
- **Region 4:** Khon Kaen
- **Region 5:** Chiang Mai
- **Region 6:** Phitsanulok
- **Region 7:** Nakhorn Pathom
- **Region 8:** Surat Thani
- **Region 9:** Songkhla


POLICE
เหตุด่วน
โทร
191
สน.พลับพลาไชย 1
www.metro.police.co.th/plubplachai 1

Metropolitan police car from Phlapphlachai Police Station 1 in Bangkok in distinctive black and white livery. (Author's photograph)


เหตุด่วน-เหตุร้าย
แจ้ง 1193
6129
HIGHWAY POLICE

RTP Highway Police car in distinctive burgundy and yellow livery, Nakhorn Ratchasima, Thailand (authors photo)

In addition there are a number of specialist subdivisions

- **Chaya Training Centre**
- **Special Operations Units**
- **191 Special Branch Police Units**
- **Police Education Bureau**
- **Marine Police Division**
- **Metropolitan Division, Bangkok**
- **Traffic Police Division** – also provides riot officers and mounted escorts to the royal family

The RTP is trained in modern policing methods and firearms. Officers Academy at Sam Phran, Detectives Training School at Bang Kaen, Metropolitan Police Training School at Bang Kaen, and the Provincial Training Schools at Nakhorn Pathom, Lampang, Nakhorn Ratchasima and Yala. There is a counter-terrorism training facility to train the RTP at Hua Hin with smaller, satellite facilities at Udon Thani, Ubon Ratchathani, Chiang Mai and Songkhla.

Royal Thai Police Aviation Division

The RTP also provides several fixed-wing and rotary aircraft in support of RTP operations throughout the four divisions and nine regions. Presently the RTP operates one Fokker 50 for personnel transportation, one Cessna CN-235 aircraft for liaison duties, nine EC-155, 15 Bell 412, 26 Bell 205 and 16 Bell 206 helicopters.

Border Patrol Police (ตำรวจตระเวนชายแดน)

The Border Patrol Police consists of over 40,000 personnel and were created with assistance of the US Central Intelligence Agency during the late 1950s and 1960s. US Special Forces trained the first 10 students in 1960 in Okinawa, who then formed the cadre of the BPP, with 60 more being trained shortly afterwards. By the mid-1960s the BPP numbered over 3,000 men, all airborne-trained and instructed in counterinsurgency tactics. The BPP are a paramilitary force tasked with protecting the borders of Thailand and operate largely as guerrilla forces 'behind enemy lines' such as in north-east and southern Thailand. The PARU (see entry below) is an offshoot of the BPP tasked with infiltration mission within and without the borders of Thailand.

Organisation of the BPP

The Border Police are organised into several departments and divisions, the largest being the Tahan Phran, and into four Regional Divisions, numbered 1 to 4. To maintain its operational survivability, the BPP conducts numerous civic actions within its area of operations maintaining its intelligence and cooperation mandates. The BPP has built, and maintained, numerous schools and civic offices and maintains a rural medical aid station giving farmers agricultural assistance and building small airstrips to aid communication and transportation in the remote border and hill tribe areas of Thailand.

RTP PARU counter-terrorism officers deploy from one of their Bell 205 helicopters. (ReligionNationKing)

- **RTP Border Police General Staff Division**: administrative support to the BPD HQ.
- **RTP Border Police Support Division**: support for the Border Police Division.
- **RTP Border Police Tactical Training Division**: training and support for the BPD.
- **RTP Border Police Village Scout Centre**: administration and training for Village Scouts.
- **RTP Border Police Counter-Insurgency Training Centre:** provides training both for the BPD and the RTP in counterinsurgency and lessons learned in the southern insurgency.
- **RTP Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit (PARU)**: tasked with infiltration, intelligence and data collection and other tasks as well as providing rotary wing assets to the BPD and Tahan Phran.
- **RTP Naresuan 261 Counter-Terrorism Unit**: modelled along the line of Germany's GSG-9, Naresuan 261 provides a counterterrorism response for the kingdom.
- **RTP Airborne Training Centre**: Lop Buri, also provides fixed and rotary wing assets to the BPD.
- **RTP Nawut Sondetya Hospital**: which provides support and care for wounded RTP officers.
- **Headquarters of the Village Scout Centre**: headquarters in Bangkok.
- **Headquarters of the Tahan Phran**: headquartered in Bangkok and divided into four quasi-military districts (see entry below).
- **BPD Districts 1–4**: subdivided into nine regions; these are the administrative and support regions for the BPD forces within Thailand.

The BPP serves as an important adjunct to both the Royal Thai Army and the Royal Thai Police, providing a bridge between the two. The BPP often operates under Army control, or even Royal Thai Marines control, especially during counterinsurgency operations. BPP units stationed along the Cambodian, Lao and Burmese borders serve as the first line of defence and withstood the worst of Vietnamese attacks during the Vietnamese-Thai border war of 1979.

Each Regional Division has four Police Regional Battalions numbered 1 through 4. The numbers are combined, with the division number first; so the 1st Division's 3rd Battalion would be the 13th Police Regional Battalion, thus:

1st BPP Regional Division, with four battalions, numbered 11 through 14
2nd BPP Regional Division, with four battalions, numbered 21 through 24
3rd BPP Regional Division, with four battalions, numbered 31 through 34
4th BPP Regional Division, with four battalions numbered 41 through 44

Each battalion is organised into three companies of three to four 32-man platoons, with each platoon being supported by one or more attached heavy weapons platoons from the Regional and Area Royal Thai Police. Platoons are organised into three sections of 8 to 11 men each depending on attachments. Each section has a light machine gun, rifles and one grenade launcher; either an M79, M203, or an RPG (especially if operating around the Cambodian border, or if attached to the Tahan Phran). The BPP has their own dedicated helicopter lift capability in UH-1D helicopters provided by the Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit. The BPP can respond within two hours of any call for help and/or reinforcement.

Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit (PARU) (หน่วยเสริมกำลังทางอากาศของตำรวจ)

PARU is the BPP's Special Forces unit responsible for both the training and support of operations, airborne reinforcement, medical assistance, and medevac. All members of PARU are trained for airborne operations including freefall jumps and are on a state of readiness with a 2-hour window for calls for assistance. PARU also is responsible for unconventional warfare within their area of responsibility, international counterterrorism, parachute training of the RTP and disaster and accident rescue.

Due to the threat to Thailand from communists after the fall of China in 1949, the US Army assisted the TNPD in establishing a special forces unit, the Airborne Cadre. In 1951 they rescued the Prime Minister from aboard the *Sri Ayutthaya*, the Thai Navy's flagship, which then positioned itself near Bangkok and started shelling government buildings and the police and army HQs. The Police Airborne Cadre was put into action, scoring a hit on the ship, setting it on fire, enabling the Prime Minister to escape. That July, General Phao seized power and with American help expanded the Police Airborne Cadre into an elite unit outside of normal police control, naming it the Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit (PARU), and was given a remit to conduct long-range reconnaissance, interdiction, covert operations in remote areas, and sabotage missions. PARU established a training camp at Lop Buri where volunteers from the army, police, and navy were trained. In the mid-1950s the camp was moved to Hua Hin, sending a handful of top recruits annually to the RTA's Officer Candidate School.

During the 1960s, PARU trained various South Vietnamese units as well as providing training for the Royal Lao armed forces and Hmong hill tribes and providing the Lao troops with airborne training. By the mid-1960s PARU had expanded its operations within Laos to include interdiction and reconnaissance/surveillance on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. PARU had to be reorganised and expanded after suffering losses during the Vietnam War.

In the 1970s Thailand switched attention to the Khmer Rouge and conducted reconnaissance operations along their shared border, concentrating in the late 1970s upon threats from Thailand's own communist insurgency. Recently PARU has been extensively engaged in the southern insurgency in the three southernmost regions of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat.

Naresuan 261 Group

Sub-Division 3 of the Border Patrol Police's PARU detachment, called Naresuan 261, is a special weapons and tactics tier-one group of the RTP. The Royal Thai Police were given an order by the Cabinet in 1983 to set up a unit to counter the increasing threat of terrorism. The unit was placed under the control of the

PARU officers conducting an exercise to extract a wounded airman, with one of their distinctively coloured UH-1D helicopters from the 203rd Squadron. (nationreligionking)

Thai Border Police and PARU.[1] During the 1986 reorganisation of the Royal Thai Police, Naresuan 261 was assigned as the 4th Company of PARU and given jurisdiction over counterterrorism and resulting criminal cases and proceedings. The 4th Company was also given the important role of protecting the royal family when in transit around Thailand and beyond. Initially when the unit was first established, it was trained 'in house' within Thailand by the Royal Thai Police and the Army; it now receives training both 'in house' and with other agencies from abroad including Germany's GSG-9 and various US SWAT teams.

Naresuan 261 and Arintaraj 26 officers leaving Terminal-21 at the conclusion of the mass shooting incident of 9 February 2020. (RTP official photo, author's collection)

Organisation

The 4th Company (PARU) consists of a Company HQ with a Raiding Platoon, Ambush and Patrol Platoon, Explosive Ordinance Platoon (EOD), Training Platoon and a Support Platoon.

The company is more of a very small battalion, with a battalion-sized support and HQ element. The teams are arranged in units of five men, following the German GSG-9 pattern rather than the British and American pattern of 4-man teams. Two teams are usual in a deployment, with attached specialists, such as EOD or snipers, depending on the requirement. Each team is loosely organised as a breacher, assaulter, team leader, explosives handler and a rifleman. All team members are medically trained and cross train so every member can take any role as required, very much like SWAT. The Naresuan 261 group's EOD teams have trained other Thai explosives ordinance teams for deployment in the southern insurgency.

Training and Recruitment

Training consists, initially, of the 24-week counter-terrorism course, with training in military tactics, sniping, waterborne operations, heliborne operations, martial arts and various vehicles, weapons, and explosives, including explosive and dynamic entry. A seven-week international counter-terrorism course, with a one-week anti-terrorist operations planning course follows on from the 24-week course and is designed for those that are already on active service. There is a 12-week explosive ordnance disposal course for those wishing to take on that role and for those wishing to get acquainted with the role of the EOD Platoon. All operatives undergo a four-week sniper-anti-sniper training course. Those assigned as an Electronics Proficiency Officer have a 12-week course to learn their role, with further specialist courses as their career progresses.

Naresuan 261 takes part in cross-agency training with foreign governments, most notably from Germany, Australia, Britain, South Africa and the United States, with some officers undergoing further training with those agencies to bring the knowledge back to the unit.

The unit is regularly tasked with escorting members of the royal family on their visits around Thailand and beyond and provide the escort for Her Royal Highness Princess Sirindhorn in the form of specially trained female members of the unit (the Black Cobra Bodyguard Detachment). Outside of their royal protection and escort duties the unit has been tasked with counterterrorist operations, hostage rescue, anti-espionage and surveillance duties around Thailand and its borders, working closely with the RTP's Arintaraj 26 unit.

Volunteer Defence Corps (Village Scouts)

Part of the Border Police Patrol, the VDC, or Village Scouts were organised in 1954 to provide a localised response for law and order and emergencies, instituted to combat the increasing reports of banditry the Scouts found their main responsibility protecting villagers from the insurgents that had infiltrated through the borders from Burma, Laos and Cambodia. The Scouts' main mission is to deny these guerrillas any safe harbours, food supplies and routes of infiltration, whilst the BPP is called to provide heavier firepower. The Scouts' force was scaled down to an estimated 33,000 members in 2010 due to its membership being absorbed into the Tahan Phran; a paramilitary unit formed to combat drug-trafficking, banditry, and insurgents at the village/regional level.

Tahan Phran (ทหารพราน)

The Tahan Phran was initially founded as a volunteer paramilitary force to supplement the Village Scouts. With 10,500 members, the Tahan Phran is deployed along the Cambodian and Burmese borders. Recruits are selected from the Village Defence Corps and given additional training and pay, formed into 32 regional regiments each of six companies, each containing two 39-man platoons, and receives support from the BPP, PARU and assigned military and police units within the area.

The Tahan Phran, whose members are sometimes referred to as Rangers, are organised along the lines of light infantry and form part of the network of units protecting and patrolling Thailand's extensive borders. Technically part of the Royal Thai Army, they operate in conjunction with the BPP with their primary mission to engage in combat whilst the BPP is more law enforcement-orientated in its mission statement.

The Tahan Phran were established in 1978 to fight the Communist Party of Thailand whose guerrillas were hiding in the mountainous regions, originally conceived by General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh with the intention to supplant the Village Defence Corps. The Tahan Phran therefore were equipped and trained to lead counterinsurgency operations; with the vast number of recruits coming from the villages and regions affected by the insurgency; some recruits were criminals whose sentence was reduced for joining whilst others were rewarded with land in return for their service. By 1981 the Tahan Phran had successfully taken over the role of counterinsurgency from the Royal Thai Army.

The Tahan Phran had a troubled start with accusations of bullying and criminal activity within their ranks, and of committing atrocities, but since the 1980s they have undergone strict reforms with recruit screening in force and in training, motivation and discipline being addressed. The force now is a far more professional force than it was previously.

The Tahan Phran have been engaged in cross-border fighting on the Myanmar frontier, with many Tahan Phran being killed. In 2001, a 19-man-strong border post, Unit 9631, situated at Ban Pang Noon near Mae Sai, was attacked and overrun by a force of around 500 Burmese rebels. Since 2004 many Tahan Phran have been sent to the southern insurgency where they have engaged and been successful in eliminating many key leaders in the area but have suffered casualties from ambushes and roadside bombs.

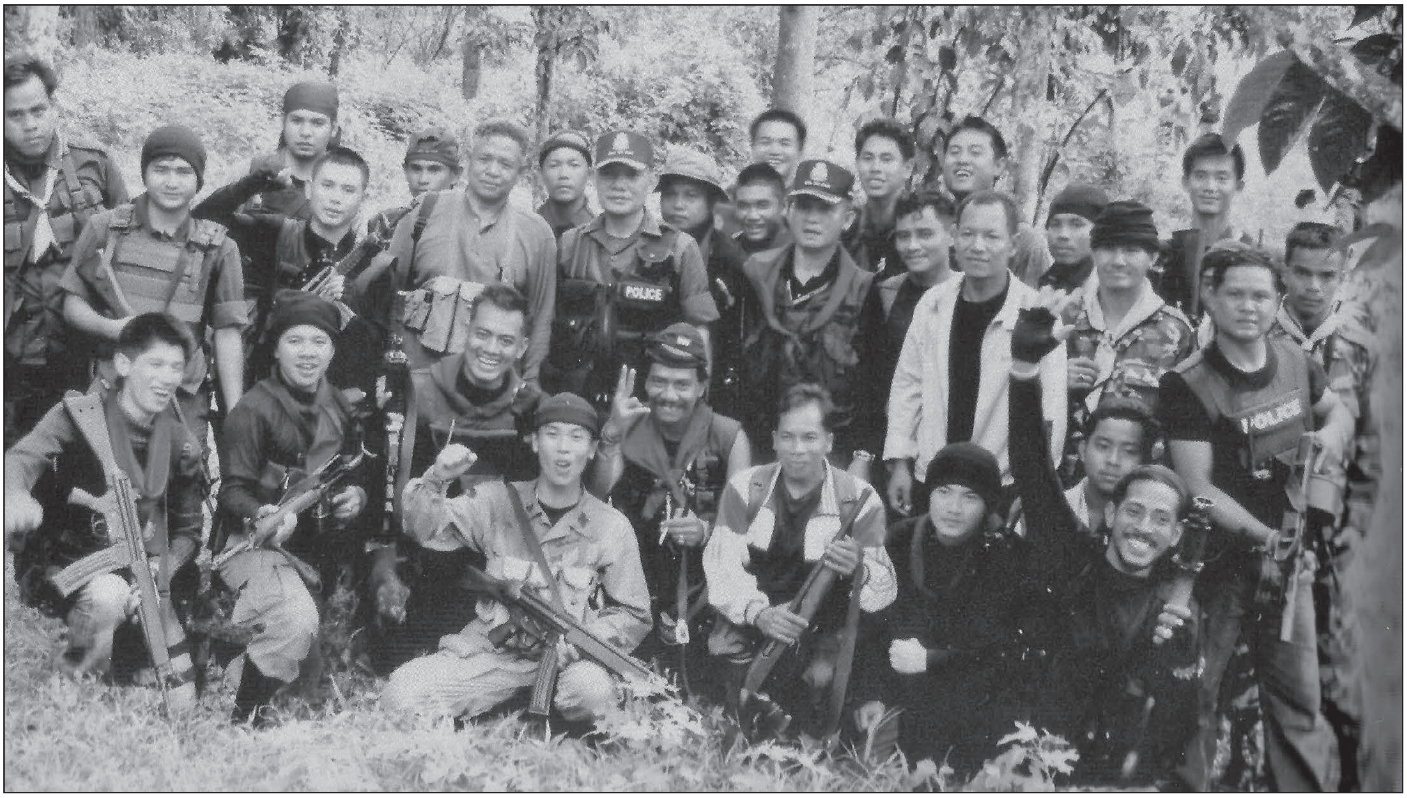
Before they can join the Tahan Phran, recruits must be between the ages of 18 and 29, be a Thai citizen and get a passing grade on the physical exam and at least have done some kind of high schooling (to grade 5), and in addition must be a resident near the deployment site. If these criteria cannot be met, then the recruit must have some kind of skill or local knowledge that would be a benefit to the unit.

Organisation of the Tahan Phran

In 1998, the Tahan Phran had 13 regimental HQs with a staff of 46, 107 companies of 90 men each, and 12 special female squads of 11 women each. They are loosely based on squads of between eight

Naresuan 261 and Arintaraj 26 officers at their range day qualification shoot for Remington 870 12-gauge shotguns. (Arintaraj 26 official photo, used with permission)

An Arintaraj 26 officer receiving a promotion to Police Master Sergeant. Note CT badge issued after successfully completing their counter-terrorism course, note new coloured uniforms now in widespread RTP use. (Arintaraj 26 official photo, used with permission)



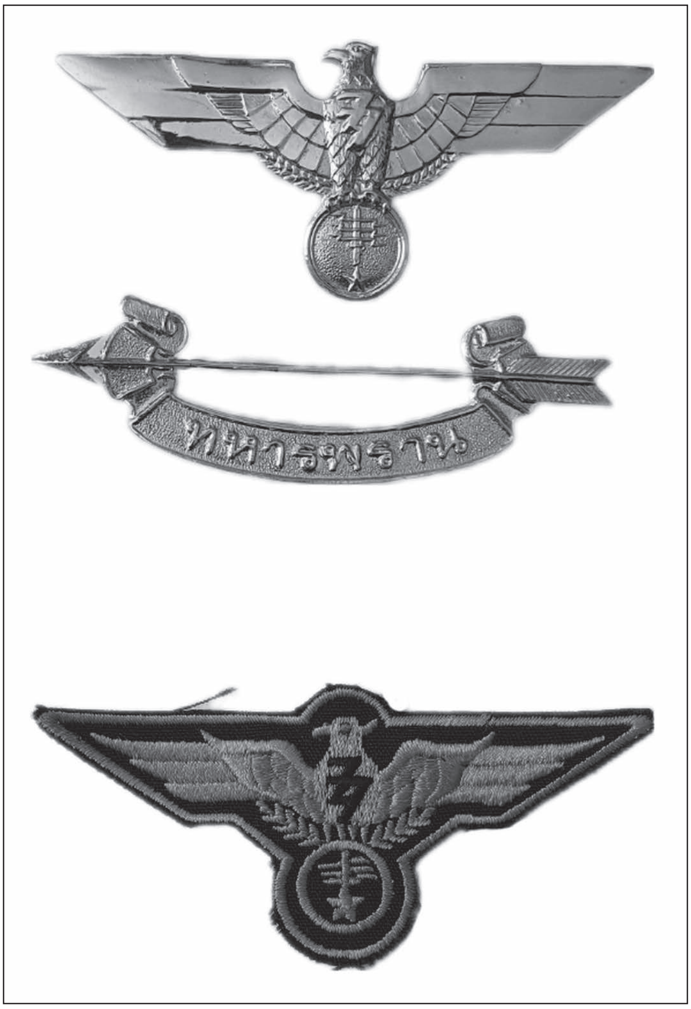
Tahan Phran in north-east Thailand showing off their diversity of uniforms, body armour and weaponry; including HK33/Type-11 and M16 assault rifles, a shotgun and a 40mm grenade launcher with revolving magazine. (RTP official photo, author's collection)

and 10 men each, with a machine gun and a rocket launcher (RPG-7) being standard, along with whatever rifles they have been issued with; usually the AK series, or HK33 rifles. Some squads have an M203 40mm grenade launcher instead of the RPG-7.

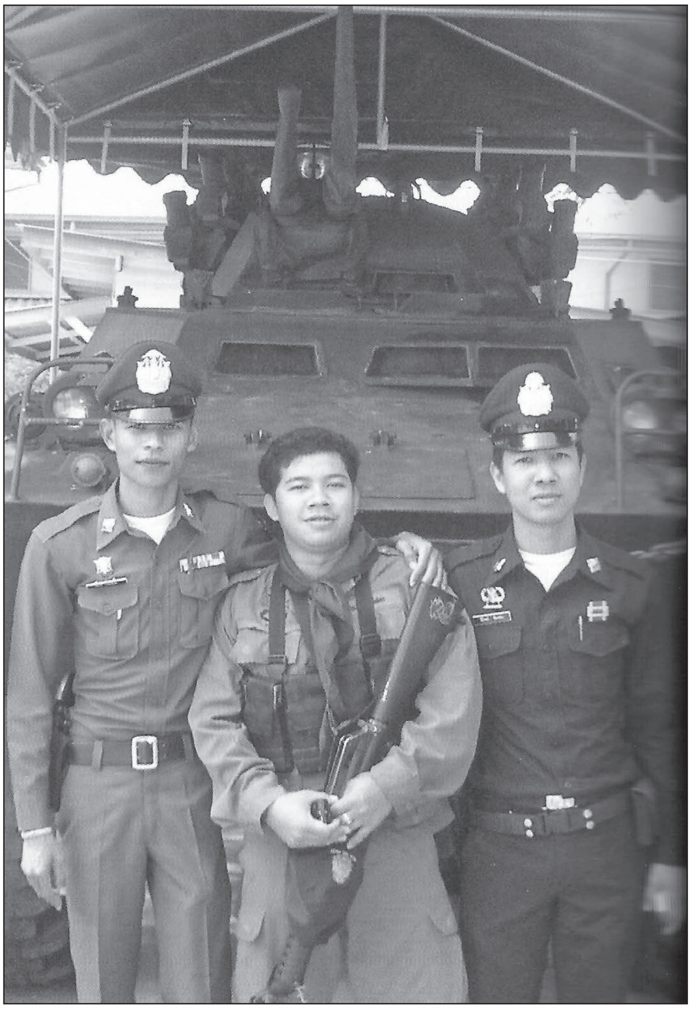
The units are led by regular RTA NCOs and officers, with all other ranks comprising full and part-time volunteers. Approximately 30 percent of those assigned are given additional (specialised) training and are reorganised into an army-level force. Through 2000 and 2001 the force underwent a major downsizing exercise with 21 of its regional regiments being disbanded as the current threat to Thailand's borders was reevaluated, especially to the east and west. The force now numbers approximately 10,500 personnel. The original headquarters at Pak Thong Chai was closed in 2000 and command transferred to the four military regions. The 31st, 32nd, 35th and 36th Regiments are responsible for guarding the border with Burma in the north-west, with the 14th Regiment in Kanchanaburi in the south-west.

Table 5: Tahan Phran Organisation

Unit	**Area of Responsibility**
1st Army HQ, Bangkok	Western and Central provinces plus the Bangkok metropolis
11th Tahan Phran Force (แรงทาฮันพราน 11)	Fort Thamarat, amphoe Pran Buri; changwat Prachuap Khiri Khan province
12th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 12)	amphoe Saikeo
13th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 13)	amphoe Somboon
14th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 14)	changwat Kanchanaburi province
2nd Army HQ, Nakhorn Ratchasima	North-east quadrant
21st Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 21)	amphoe Sirie and Loei
22nd Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 22)	Fort Suranari, changwat Nakhorn Ratchasima
23rd Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 23)	amphoe Kantarakul, changwat Nan Province
26th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 26)	changwat Nakhorn Rachasima
3rd Army HQ, Phitsanulok	Northern and north-western Thailand
31st Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 31)	amphoe Phayao and Chienkam
32nd Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 32)	changwat Narn province
33rd Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 33)	Fort Ekathotarot, changwat Phitsanulok province
35th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 35)	amphoe Kam Payne Pet and Clone Lane
36th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 36)	changwat Mae Hong Song
4th Army HQ, Nakhorn Si Thammarat	Southern Thailand and the southern insurgency
41st Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 41)	amphoe Yara and Rahman
42nd Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 42)	southern insurgency
43rd Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 43)	amphoe Narathiwat and Choi An
44th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 44)	amphoe Surat Thani and Baanna Thane
45th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 45)	southern insurgency
46th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 46)	southern insurgency
47th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 47)	southern insurgency
48th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 48)	southern insurgency
49th Tahan Phran Regiment (กรมทหารพรานที่ 49)	southern insurgency



Tahan Phranh badge in metal and cloth versions, using an eagle following distinctly Second World War German lines. The curved brass scroll states 'Thahan Phran' in Thai. (Author's photograph)



Tahan Phran (centre) and RTP/BBP officers in front of a V-150 Commando armoured car. (RTP official photo, author's collection)

On the western frontier the Tahan Phran work in close cooperation with the BPP and the Royal Thai Army in counterinsurgency, border patrol and protection, where there is sporadic fighting with guerrilla elements and drug traffickers. Many of the Tahan Phran have been killed in the skirmishes that break out frequently in the region between the Thai authorities and Myanmar troops, guerrillas, drug traffickers, the United Wa Army and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.

In 2004 violence in the southern Burmese peninsula forced the Royal Thai Army to triple its presence in the area. Working with the US Drug Enforcement Administration, Tahan Phran units have reduced the volume of trafficked heroin in the area and have been involved in numerous skirmishes with drug warlords in the area. On the Lao and Cambodian frontier, Tahan Phran have primary responsibility for observation, cross-border surveillance, and protection.

Task Force 80

The number of refugees flooding into Thailand in 1979 from Cambodia became a security issue as suspected Khmer Rouge guerrillas were amongst the legitimate refugees fleeing Cambodia. Prime Minister Kriangsak Chomanan, the ex-commander of the RTA placed the affected border districts under martial law and authorised the Joint Operations of the Supreme Command to be in control. They responded by establishing Task Force 80.

This specialised unit of the Tahan Phran was tasked with the overall responsibility of ensuring the refugees' security, protection, and welfare. They were additionally tasked with securing food, provisions, and welfare for the refugees, and for securing the camps they were emplaced within to dissuade Khmer Rouge guerrillas from infiltrating them and subverting the population. Task Force 80 was also tasked with defensive duties and the supply of food, ammunition and above all weapons to the factions fighting the Khmer Rouge, the anti-Vietnamese factions within Cambodia itself, and the *Armee Nationale Sihanoukiste* fighting to regain the country from the Cambodian communists.

Task Force 80 was accused of numerous accounts of atrocities, human rights abuses, violations of positions of trust and other acts. With a recruit base that had endured most of the fighting on the border, that had relations in some cases in Cambodia, and had seen the perversions of the Khmer Rouge, the members of Task Force 80 were not above taking their frustrations out on their charges and any suspected guerrillas that they captured. Little or no supervision, being the lowest paid, the least equipped and the lowest of the military hierarchy and experiencing morale problems did not help the situation. Task Force 80 was disbanded in 1988.

Salween Special Task Force

The Salween Special Task Force was established in 1998 to protect the Salween National Park and its wildlife sanctuary in Mae Hong Song Province and was tasked with protecting the wildlife and the park's borders and establishing operations against poachers, smugglers and wildlife dealers. It is successfully protecting the small tiger population within the park.

Mekong Special Task Force

Formed in 2007, this Tahan Phran unit works closely with the Laotian authorities in curbing the tide in human trafficking along the Mekong River and its borders between Thailand and Laos with much cross-border cooperation.

Tahan Phran Marines Regiment (กรมทหารพรานนาวิกโยธิน กองทัพเรือ)

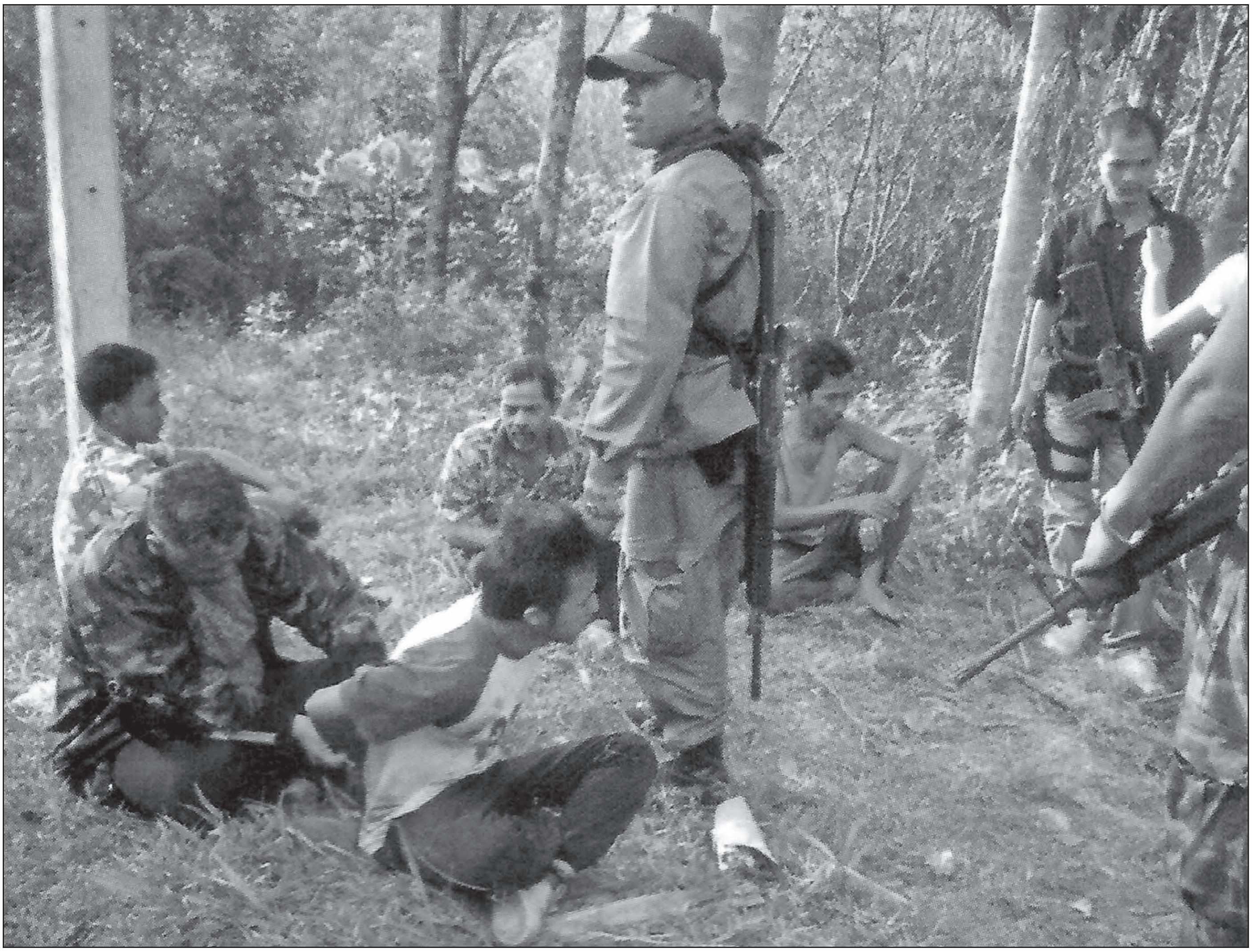
Organised as a light infantry regiment it like its land cousins, the Tahan Phran Marines are subordinate to the Royal Thai Marine Corps, established in 2016 due to the reduction of Thai government forces fighting the southern insurgency. The Tahan Phran Marines are equipped with RPGs, M203 grenade launchers, HK33s made under license in Thailand, M16s (currently being replaced with M16A4s and IMI Tavors) and FN FAL machine guns. The marines have responsibility for protecting the inland seaways and sea borders with Thailand and have taken up the brunt of the fighting in the southern provinces. The marines are organised into the 1st Tahan Phran Marines HQ Company, with 16 companies numbered one through 16, each with three platoons numbered one through three and organised in sections of 11 men with a heavy weapons platoon. There is also the 1st Female Tahan Phran Marine Platoon organised along the same lines as the 1st Tahan Phran Company but staffed entirely with females.

The Southern Insurgency

Since 2004 Muslim insurgents have fought the Thai government in an attempt to gain an independent state for the area's 1.8 million Muslims. The conflict is one of the most lethal in the region in the twenty-first century, and certainly for Asia, and by 2013 had claimed the lives of 5,500 dead and over 10,000 wounded.[2]

Formal peace talks, instigated by the Thai National Security Council's president Lieutenant General Paradorn Pattanatabut and representatives of the *Barisan Revolusi Nasional* (National Revolutionary Front) (BRN) looked to resolve the crisis that has been going on for over 10 years. This is the first time the Thai government has committed itself to actually trying to resolve the crisis and hopes are high that the talks, initiated in 2020 will succeed.

The Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 demarcated the border between Thailand and Malaysia, leaving three southern provinces with an 80 percent Muslim population inside Thailand's borders: Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat. Various government initiatives since then have tried, and failed, to assimilate the Malay-Muslims into Thai Buddhist culture. Revolutions, insurgencies, and open revolt have smouldered in these regions since the 1970s.



Captured insurgents in Pattani Province, South Thailand. (RTP official photo, author's collection)

Divided along lines of ethnic-nationalism, religion, Islamisation and the Malay Communist Party, with major differences over their ultimate political goals and ambitions, these earlier insurgencies were doomed to failure. By the mid-1990s the Thai government had quelled these insurgencies, exploiting the insurgents' inability to coordinate and/or work together.

The reemergence of violence that erupted in the southern provinces in 2004 is markedly different from its predecessors in the fact that civilians have been routinely targeted. The insurgents have not been limited to the countryside, but have actively targeted cities, villages, schools and any and all government infrastructure. By mid-2007 the violence had peaked, with an estimated 60,000 Royal Thai soldiers in the area. Since 2008 the violence slowly dropped off until stabilising by 2009.

There was an average of 30 deaths per month between 2009–2013, with 118 RTA soldiers killed, 68 police and 227 Rangers killed. According to the government there were at least 3,380 deaths between 2004 and 2012, of which 2,316 were civilians, 372 troops, 278 police, and 250 suspected insurgents. In addition, 157 education official and seven Buddhist monks were killed. The deaths of the teachers in particular pressurised the Thai government even further with school closures and absences from those classes that do remain open. A total of 595 Improvised Explosive Devices had been set off by 2010, with an average of 12 attacks per month.[3] Most IEDs were in the 20kg range, but larger devices were also encountered, up to the 200kg size. Usually targeting security forces, convoys and such like, these devices were either concealed beside the road or buried under it. One such device killed Police Colonel Sompien Eksomya a year before his planned retirement. Colonel Eksomya was the superintendent of Yala's Bannang Sata District and was killed whilst returning from visiting various villages in the area, with the bomb leaving a one-metre-deep crater. His driver, Corporal Songsiri, Police Sergeant Major Itharabourn and Police Lieutenant Loma were injured in the blast which killed the Colonel on the spot.

The insurgents did not just use roadside bombs, or bombs concealed in motorcycles (a tactic often employed in the area's cities) but also grenades or RPGs when they were available, and also conducted arson attacks. The violence peaked on occasion but remained steady and has not applied excessive pressure upon the Thai government.

The Royal Thai Police estimate that there were over 10,000 insurgents operating in the southern districts and have published an order of battle listing the names of 10,000 individuals involved with terrorism and the insurgency with rewards offered for their capture. The Thai government claimed in 2012 that they had killed over 215 insurgents, wounded at least 5, and captured over 5,300, with 21 of those arrested facing life in prison and a further 21 had been executed for crimes of treason, sedition and terrorism.

In February 2013 the insurgents attacked a Thai Marine base in Narathiwat. The RTA Marines had, however, recovered plans for the attack from an insurgent killed in a firefight three days earlier and set up an ambush. Sixteen of the 50 attackers were killed in the firefight, with four being arrested later.

The Royal Thai Army became better equipped to deal with the insurgency than it was in 2004, with a more professional approach, training, and organisation, largely in part from experience, and from US instructors and US/European assistance. Checkpoints on the roads, increased security patrols, and an increased presence in the cities have denied the insurgents the ability to attack and move around at will. They have been slowly denied the countryside, the cities and the roads, leading them to the negotiation table.

Organisation of the Insurgents

It was not just the BRN that operated within the southern provinces, but numerous other factions and small guerrilla groups. The BRN-Coordinate (BRN-C), a Madras-based insurgency movement under the leadership of Masae Useng, split from the BRN during the mid-1980s and most of the violence is attributed to this group.[4] *Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Pattani* (Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement) (GMIP), an organisation was under the leadership of two Afghanistan War veterans who fought the Soviets with the Mujahidin in the 1980s, began smuggling guns for the Acehnese Independence Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM) and then went on to specialise in extortion, racketeering and kidnapping. These organisations are basically all subordinate groups under the umbrella of the BRN, with smaller groups being formed and then absorbed into the BRN. Most leaflets and notices issued by the groups have been simply signed 'Warriors of Pattani.'

There were 35 regional commanders known as *Juwae* who ran operations at the district level. Above them were 20 commanders, who alongside the various groups and cells ran the entire insurgency and met every two months, these are the *Dewan Pimpinan Pusat* (DPP) under the leadership of Sapae-ing Basor, Wan Kadir Che Wan, Abdullah Sungkar and Kabir Abdul Rahman.[5]

In 2012 a senior *Juwae* Wae Ali Copter Waeji surrendered with 90 of his men. There had been few incidents where insurgents surrendered to the Thai authorities and this was the largest defection, despite an amnesty offered by the Thai government to those insurgents who defect. Further measures were implemented by the Royal Thai government to get more 'Warriors of Pattani' to defect, with amnesties being granted to those that came over to the government side.

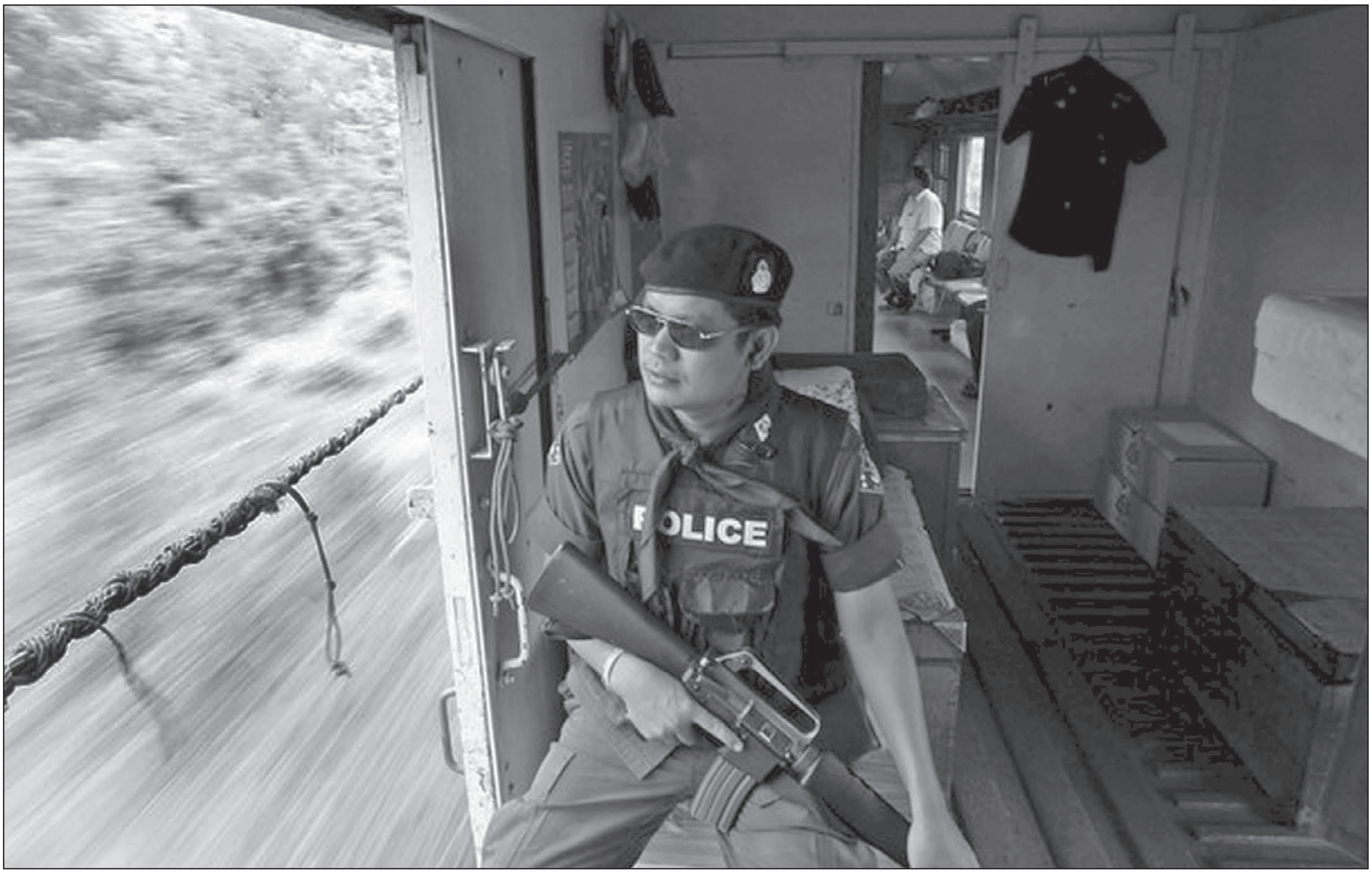
The insurgents were mainly concentrated in Narathiwat, with over 4,000 named there, 3,000 in Pattani and 2,000 in Yala. The DPP had several branches, including its military arm (the insurgency itself), an advisory council (*Ulahama*), an economic division, youth forces and a public relations arm which deals with propaganda and literature and may also run their social media channels.

The DPP is organised along Four Administrative Regions:

1st Admin Region: Yala and Narathiwat's Rueso District
2nd Admin Region: Narathiwat and Yala's Raman District
3rd Admin Region: Pattani District
4th Admin Region: Sogkhalas four Districts

Several factions, including the Pattai United Liberation Organisation and the *Barisan Islam Pembebasan Pattani* (BIPP) and the BRN have joined forces under the banner of *Bersatu* since 2012. They are currently engaged in absorbing the BRN-C.[6]

The main groups under the leadership of the DPP are the *Muhajadeen Pattani Movement* (BNP); the Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) is the second largest insurgent group. The GMIP and the BRN who are the largest group of insurgents within the DPP, the *Barisan Nasional Pembebasan* (Patani Pattani Liberation National Front) (BNPP), the *Jamah Islamiyah* (JI) and lastly the *Runda Kumpulan Kecil* (RKK).



RTP officer riding a passenger train between Bangkok and Hat Yai; after several bombings and derailments, the RTP now guard passenger trains travelling to southern Thailand. (RTP official photo, author's collection)

CHAPTER 3

THE POLITICAL CRISES OF 2005–2010

The Yellow Shirt (PAD)/Red Shirt (UDD) Protests

During 2005 and 2006 a series of political events surrounding the then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and Sondhi Limthongkul led to widespread civil unrest, culminating in a coup d'état in September 2006 organised by the military after Prime Minister Thaksin fled the country. A junta government was established under Surayud Chulanot, a favourite of the Privy Councillor Prem Tinsulanonda who effectively ran the country.

Sondhi Limthongkul (สนธิ ลิ้มทองกุล), a Thai media mogul who had previously supported Prime Minister Thaksin, played a leading role in the crisis and its development with his establishment of the anti-Thaksin Peoples Alliance for Democracy (PAD) (พันธมิตรประชาชนเพื่อประชาธิปไตย), alongside state enterprise unions who were staunchly against Thaksin's privatisation plans, and human rights activists who had denounced the Prime Minister's rule as undemocratic and a monopoly of power. The PAD also staunchly supported the King, with prominent members including eminent socialists and members of the Thai military calling a coup after Thaksin left the country for a United Nations Summit in New York.

The PAD – also known as the Yellow Shirts (เสื้อเหลือง) – was formed to lead demonstrations against the then government of Thaksin Shinawatra prior to the 2006 military coup. They choose the colour yellow as it is the symbolic birth colour (Monday) for King Rama IX as they declared that the then PM Thaksin Shinawatra was anti-royalist. The PAD was also against any changes to the constitution that would allow politicians banned from political office to re-enter politics. The PAD protested any revoking of the charges levied against the former prime minister and called for a 'New Age of politics, free from the corrupted politicians' and accused Somchai Wongsawat as being a 'Thaksin Proxy.'

The National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship UDD (แนวร่วมประชาธิปไตยต่อต้านเผด็จการแห่งชาติ) – the Red Shirts (เสื้อแดง) – chose the colour red in opposition to the PAD's yellow. They comprised scholars, activists, rural workers and supporters of Thaksin emerging from the shifting socio-economic changes in north-east Thailand and based itself on a set of frustrated economic and political aspirations. The UDD was initially opposed to the 2006 coup, claiming the coup was orchestrated by members of the Privy Council, especially Prem Tinsulanonda, the then Chief of the Privy Council and Thai elites.

2006 Yellow Shirt Protests

In January 2006, hundreds of protesters led by Sondhi Limthongkul, two former senators and an MP stormed into Government House, overwhelmed the guard there, and occupied the building before regrouping outside to continue the protest. This was seen by many as the first action in the lead up to the coup.

In February a large rally in Government Plaza drew a huge crowd, estimated at somewhere between 40–50,000 people. The following weekend, according to Sondhi Limthongkul's paper *Phoochatkam Raiwan*, a crowd of 100,000 attended a rally. Pro-Thaksin demonstrations also drew large crowds with an estimated 200,000 people turning out at the Sanam Luang rally organised by Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party.

Thaksin Shinawatra dissolved Parliament in late February 2006 after charges of corruption were levied against him following various newspaper stories, criticism, and personal attacks. The pressure for Thaksin to resign grew after the selloff of his family's controlling stake of the Shin Corporation to Temasek Holdings, a Singaporean government investment holding, and this scandal created a huge number of anti-Thaksin supporters, especially amongst the middle class, urban upper class royalist Bangkokians, academics and state enterprise employees who opposed Thaksin's privatisation plans.

Anti-Thaksin rallies included burning him in effigy and the shouting of such slogans as 'Long Live the King', 'Thaksin Get Out' and 'Restore Power to the King'. The anti-Thaksin protesters established a permanent camp in tents outside Government House, with over 3,000 permanently protesting there and causing huge traffic congestion. The site was intended to be used by the Thai Red Cross for their annual fair, the protesters being told that if they disrupted the fair, or Princess Sirindhorn's visit 'there would be trouble', to which the Thai police were told by the protesters 'if we are breaking the law, then arrest all 100,000 of us!'

Pro-Thaksin supporters from north and north-east Thailand arrived in their farming vehicles and set up camp at Chatuchak Park in north Bangkok (and site of a massive weekend market) where they were joined by over 400 motorcycle taxi drivers. Anti-Thaksin supporters held rallies on the week before the elections at various central Bangkok shopping centres, including the Siam Square, Siam Discovery and Siam Paragon centres, and forced the closure of hundreds of offices resulting in the loss of over 1.2 billion Thai Baht in revenue. The protesters also closed down Sukhumvit and Silom roads, causing massive traffic congestion.

Senior members of the PAD accused Thaksin Shinawatra of not paying taxes on the complicated sale of Shin Corporation to Temasek Holdings. In late February the Prime Minister called for a snap general election to be held in April; Thaksin won with 66 percent of the vote but the election had been boycotted by the major opposition parties, led by the PAD, as they argued there were major problems with the process and that a series of by-elections should have been held prior to the general election to enable the candidates to realign with different parties following recent events.

On 3 April, Thaksin stated that he would form a 'Reconciliatory Panel' and proposed three members of his own TRT party who could take the role of caretaker prime ministers until further elections could be conducted in October. The PAD immediately dismissed the idea stating that 'it was too late for reconciliation.' He stepped down from the position of Prime Minister after the election results were disqualified and the PAD stated they would continue to rally until he was gone.

Thaksin formerly stepped down on 4 April in favour of Chindchai Wannasathit, his Deputy Prime Minister, after an audience with the King; Thaksin stating that he wished the Thais to re-unite as the auspicious 60th Anniversary of the King being on the throne was a mere 60 days away. He promptly went on holiday returning to work on 19 May in the wake of the nullification of the election results and catastrophic flooding in the north of Thailand. After the publication of an article in the PAD's newspaper claiming a Thaksin-backed plan to overthrow the King, Thaksin sued the newspaper's owner Sondhi Limthongkul, who then called for the public to choose between Thaksin or the King.

King Bhumibol had called upon the courts to resolve the situation and in May the courts invalidated the election results in a judgement based on the positioning of the election booths within the polling stations, and jailed members of the Election Commission (EC) if they would not resign. New elections were scheduled for 15 October 2006. The opposition forces agreed to run in the election and numerous new parties were also formed and campaigned for election.

The 2006 Coup D'état

Rumours of a possible coup and divisions within the army began as early as February 2006. In May General Sonthi Boonyaratglin issued assurances that the army would not seize power. In July just over 100 middle-ranking pro-Thaksin army officers were 're-assigned' (fuelling rumours of an internal rift in the RTA) and in August there were reports of unusual tank movements near Bangkok, though these were described by the RTA as a 'regular exercise.' At a graduating party for officer cadets, Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda told them that the Thai Army must obey the King, *not* the Government. In September, five Army officers were arrested by the RTP after one of them was intercepted with a car full of explosives heading for the Prime Minister's residence (they would be released after the coup).

On 19 September 2006 the Thai Army moved into position as the Prime Minister was attending a UN Summit abroad. General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, Army Chief of Staff led the coup d'état against PM Thaksin Shinawatra, citing alleged *lèse majesté* offences against the government by the Prime Minister, civil unrest, and creation of social division within the country, though of all of the charges levied against him, he was only charged with corruption. The General then went on to form the military Council for Democratic Reform (CDR). Shortly after the coup, the PAD dissolved itself.

After the 2006 coup, the junta under General Sonthi Boonyaratglin appointed an interim constitution that was a coalition of the 1917 constitution and various charters and set up the Junta of the CDR as both the office of the Prime Minister and as the Parliament. Protest did not end with the tanks on the streets of Bangkok – which were gradually withdrawn – but continued with protests held at Siam Centre (being the site of the first post-coup protest on 22 September), Victory Monument, Thammasat and Chulalongkorn universities, Chiang Mai and the Democracy Monument.

Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda was the mastermind behind the coup, after which he cancelled the upcoming elections, abrogated the constitution, dissolved Parliament, the Constitutional Court and banned all protests, political activities and the Thai Rak Thai Party, arrested Cabinet members, declared martial law nationwide and censored the media. The Council for Democratic Reform was formed with the idea of restoring a democratic government within one year and then the council would be transformed into the permanent Council for National Security. The CDR drafted an interim charter and appointed retired General Surayud Chulanot as Prime Minister. Elections were planned for 23 December 2007 with martial law being lifted in 41 of Thailand's 76 provinces.

A court led by the Junta Government formed under Surayud Chulanot found Thaksin Shinawatra guilty on several of the counts levied against him, including human rights abuses, most notably extra-judicial killings during the war on drugs, corruption (including only giving promotions to those loyal to him), and other charges.

The 2007 elections set up by the junta were won by the Peoples Power Party (PPP) which set up a coalition government with five smaller parties that had previously been allies to Thaksin's TRT Party forming a majority under new PM Samak Sundaravej. The new government immediately set about drafting a new constitution, declaring that of 2007 as unconstitutional.

The PAD re-formed after the PPP won the 2007 general election and immediately started protesting on the grounds that the constitutional amendment was designed to dismiss the charges against Thaksin Shinawatra and the charges of election fraud against PPP executives. Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej immediately dropped the proposed changes, but the PAD continued to call for his resignation.

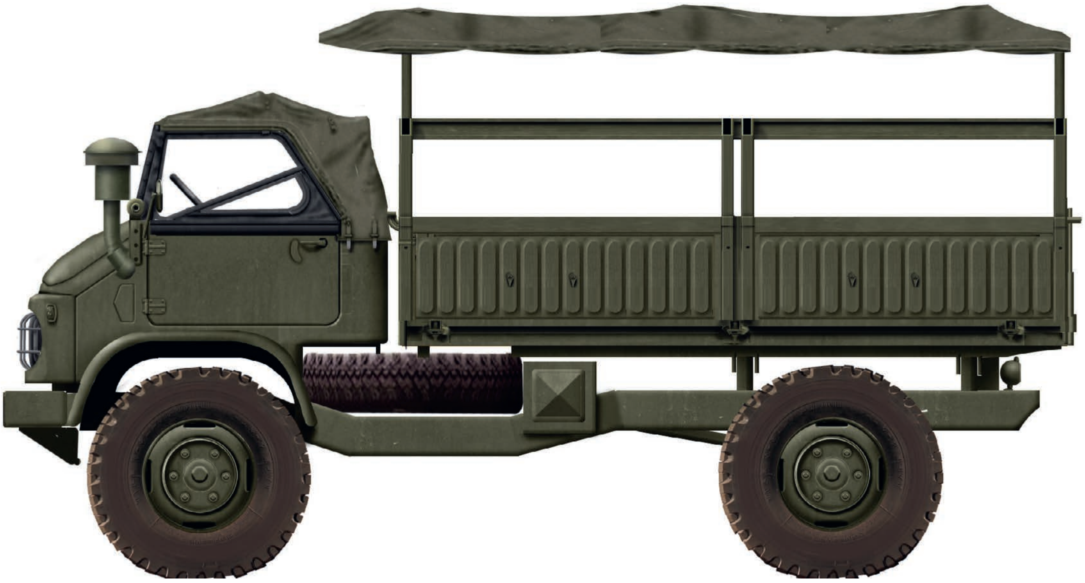
PAD protesters took to the streets, seized Government House, and blocked major highways in August of 2007, along with airports in Hat Yai, Krabi and Phuket. Train services were interrupted and stopped by sympathetic unions, and it was threatened that water and electric supplies would be cut off to the businesses and houses of non-PAD supporters. Armed PAD supporters, dubbed the Srivichai Warriors, seized a government TV station as well as several government ministries. Violence between PAD supporters and non-PAD supporters left dozens injured and one PAD protester dead.

2008–2010 Crisis

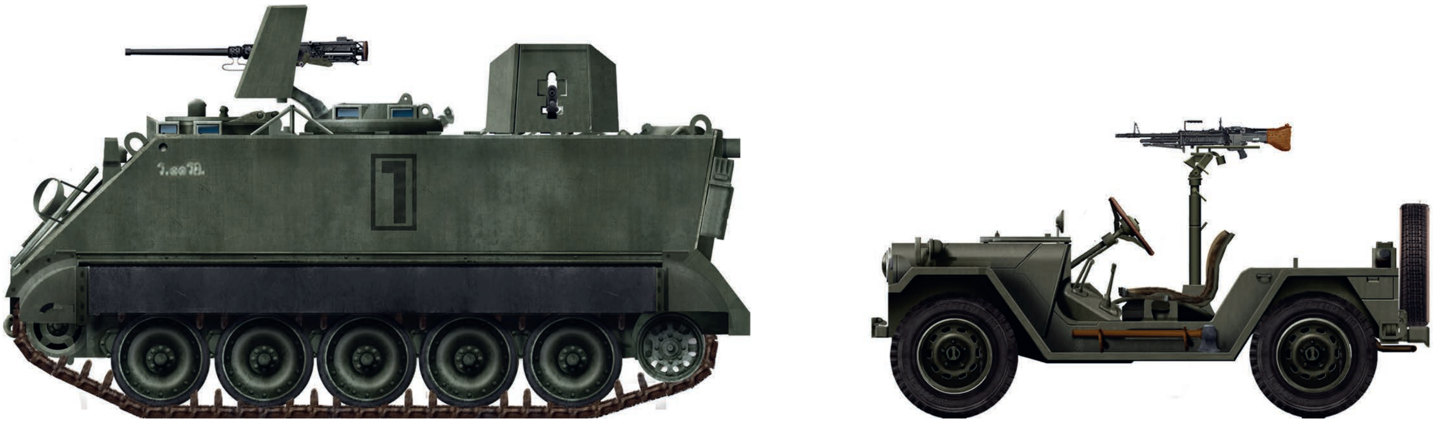
After the 2006 coup d'état there was a 'transition period' where the opposing forces (pro-Thaksin) and those for the government balanced themselves out. In 2008 the conflict escalated from peaceful means to protest and eventual armed insurrection. The crisis can be divided into two phases, the conflict between the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the People's Power Party (*Phak Phalang Prachachon*/PPP) of prime ministers Somchai Wongsawat (สมชาย วงศ์สวัสดิ์) and Samak Sundaravej (สมัคร สุนทรเวช) in the early stages, then later PAD's conflict with the National United Front for Democracy (UDD) of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva (อภิสิทธิ์ เวชชาชีวะ), a continuation of the earlier 2005–2006 crisis of the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) of then Prime Minister Thaksin

กระทรวงกลาโหม
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

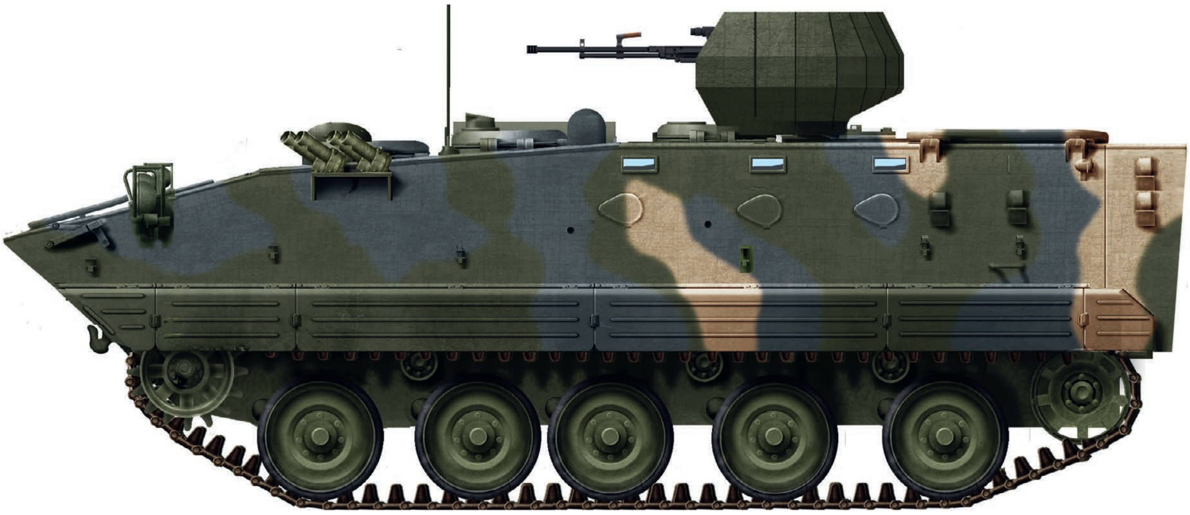
Thai Ministry of Defence with razor wire and barricades, Bangkok 2007. (Author's photo)



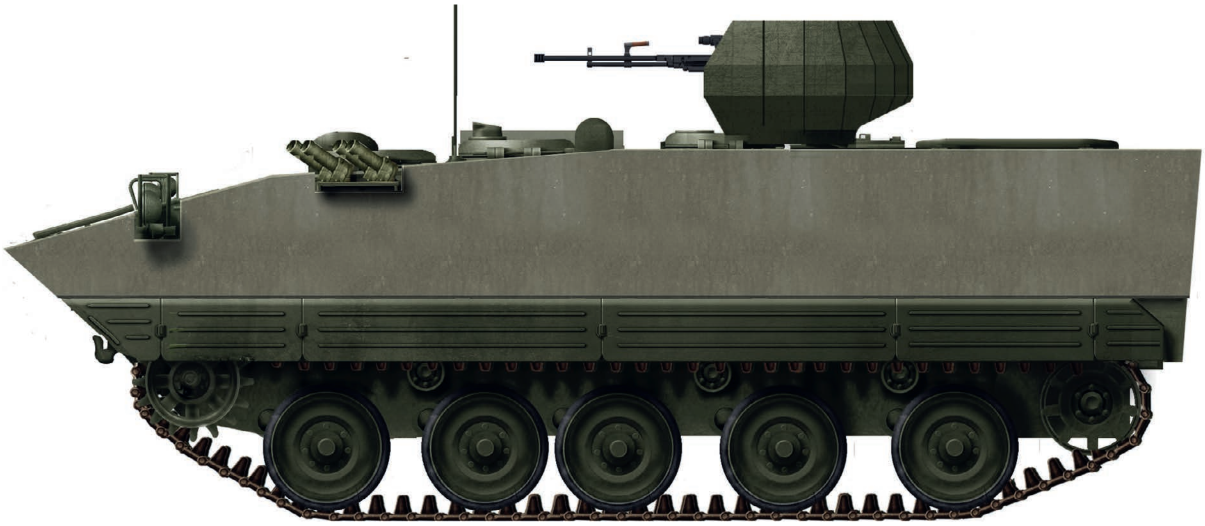
The principal multipurpose truck of the Royal Thai Army is the Unimog, designed by Daimler-Benz in the late 1940s and in production ever since. It is based on a flexible ladder frame with short overhangs, and coil sprung beam portal axles, with a central torque tube and transverse links. Unimogs are available in a large number of very different versions: the Royal Thai Army primarily operating the 404 and 417 (shown here), with a short bonnet and a high driving cab to enable the operator to see the terrain and more easily manipulate the vehicle. All are painted in dark olive green overall. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



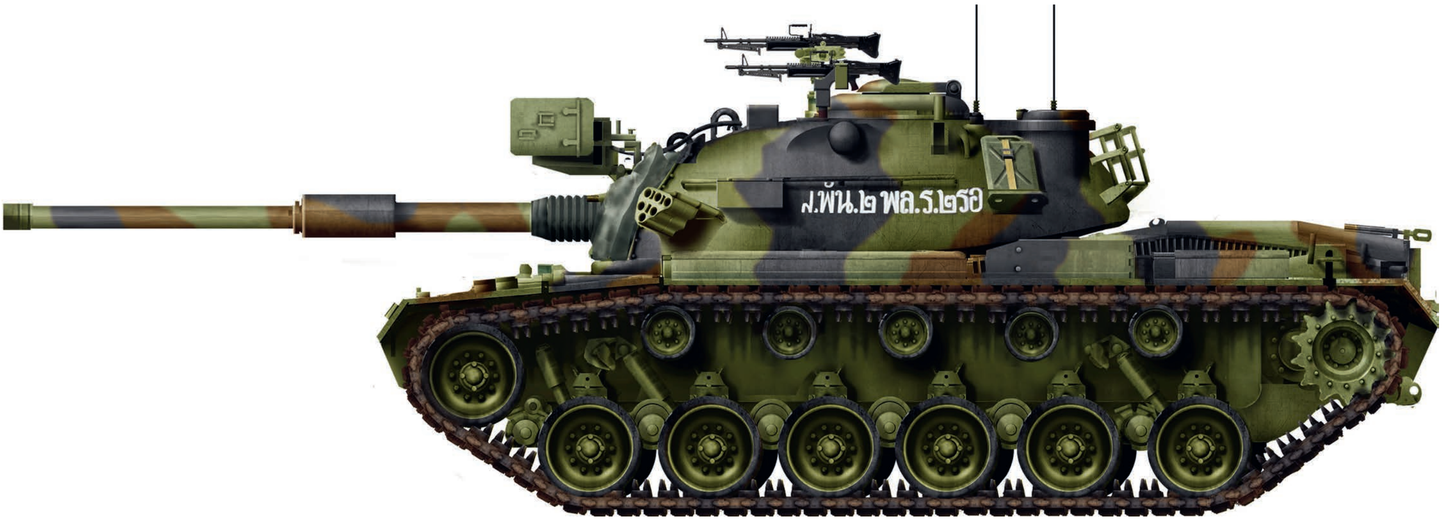
The principal armoured personnel carrier of the Royal Thai Army remains the venerable M113A1 and M113A3, a total of 430 of which have been acquired since the late 1960s. This example has a .50-cal Browning M2 machine gun mounted above the commander's position, and side mounted 7.62mm M60 machine guns with small shields in a configuration similar to the US Army's ACAV though lacking the armoured tub that would usually protect the commander's position. Another vehicle in widespread service is the Ford M151 ¼-ton 4x4 utility truck, generally known as the 'MUTT'. Large number of M151s were deployed on the streets of Bangkok during the various periods of unrest, often armed with a pintle-mounted M60 machine gun. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



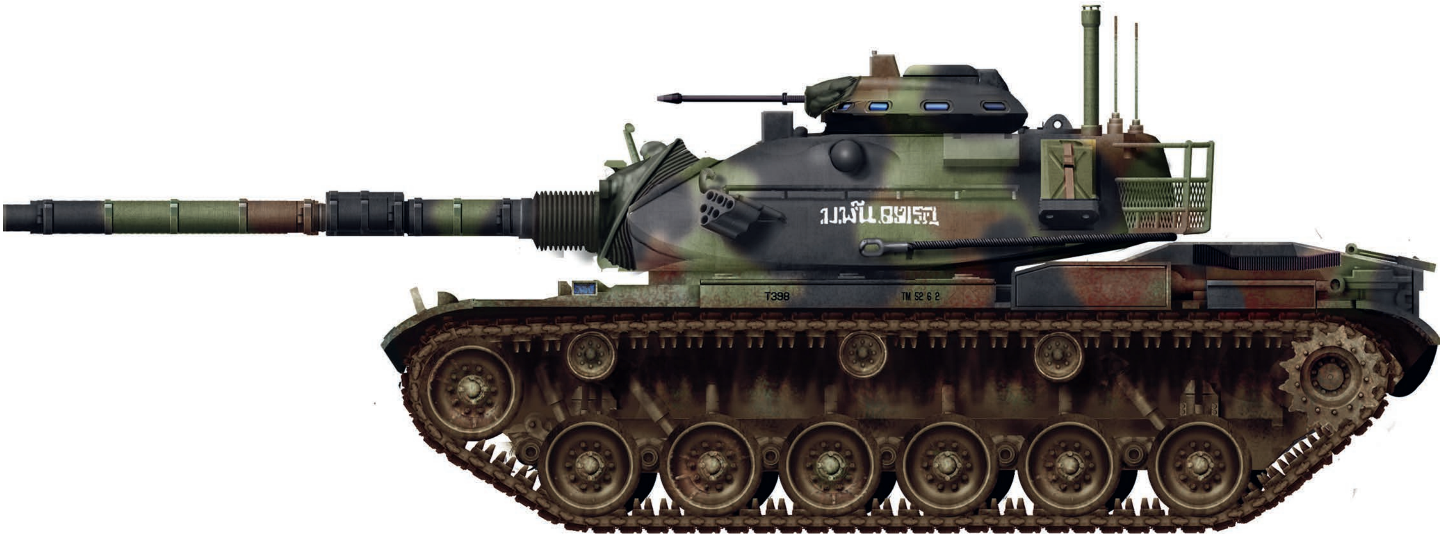
Starting in 1987, the Royal Thai Army acquired a total of 410 Type-85 armoured personnel carriers. Based on the earlier and slightly smaller YW-531 armoured personnel carrier designed and manufactured in the People's Republic of China, the Type-85 was developed exclusively for the export market. Having a crew of two, and capacity for 10 troops, it has front hull made of 14mm thick welded steel, and weighs around 13,000kg. Armament consists of a single 12.7mm Type-54 machine gun. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



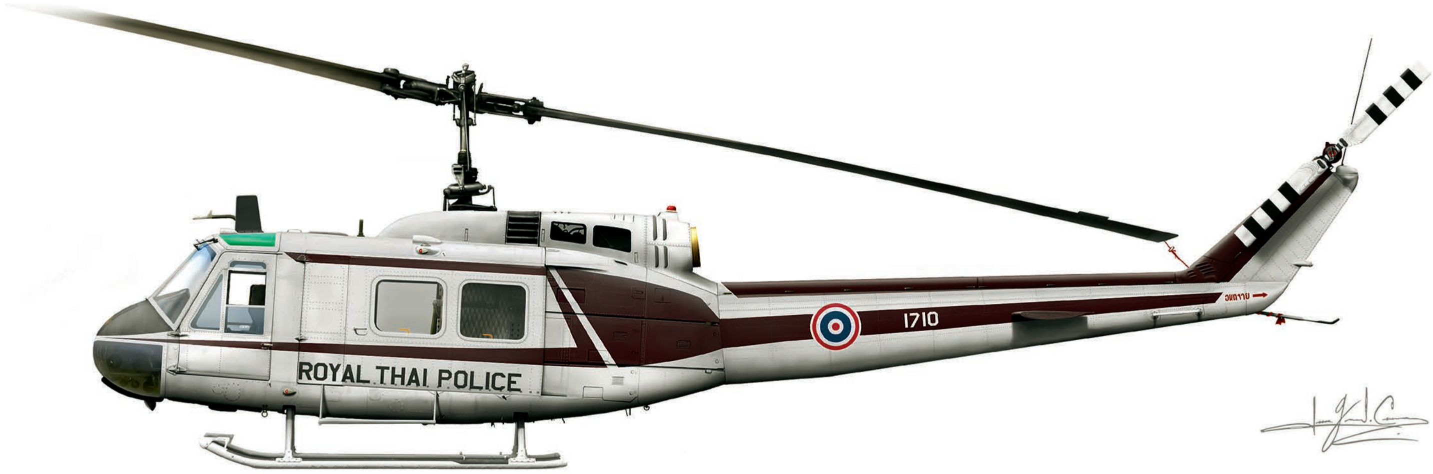
As a result of combat experience in skirmishes with Myanmar and the experience of other users from abroad, over the recent years the Roya Thai Army has upgraded its Type-85s with additional armour plates on the side of the hull, smoke dischargers, and modern radios and intercom systems. The vehicle remains amphibious: a folding trim board stowed at the front of the hull can be raised to protect the driver from the splash: once in the water, the vehicle is propelled by its own tracks. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)


ส.พัน.๒ พล.ร.๒รอ

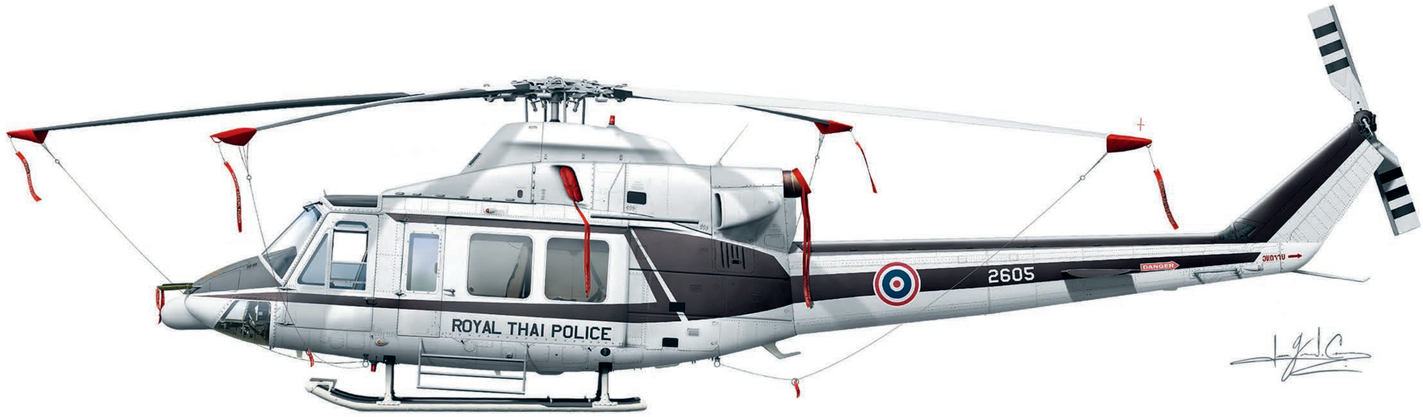
The Royal Thai Army acquired its first M48A3 Patton tanks from the surplus stocks of the US Army during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with further purchases of the M48A5PI standard in the 1980s and 90s. These retained the AVDS-1790-2A engine, the CD-850-5A transmission, and the T97 track, but received most other components of the RISE Hull PIP upgrade. They have a camouflage pattern similar in general appearance to the three colour NATO scheme, and often have large inscriptions on the turret. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



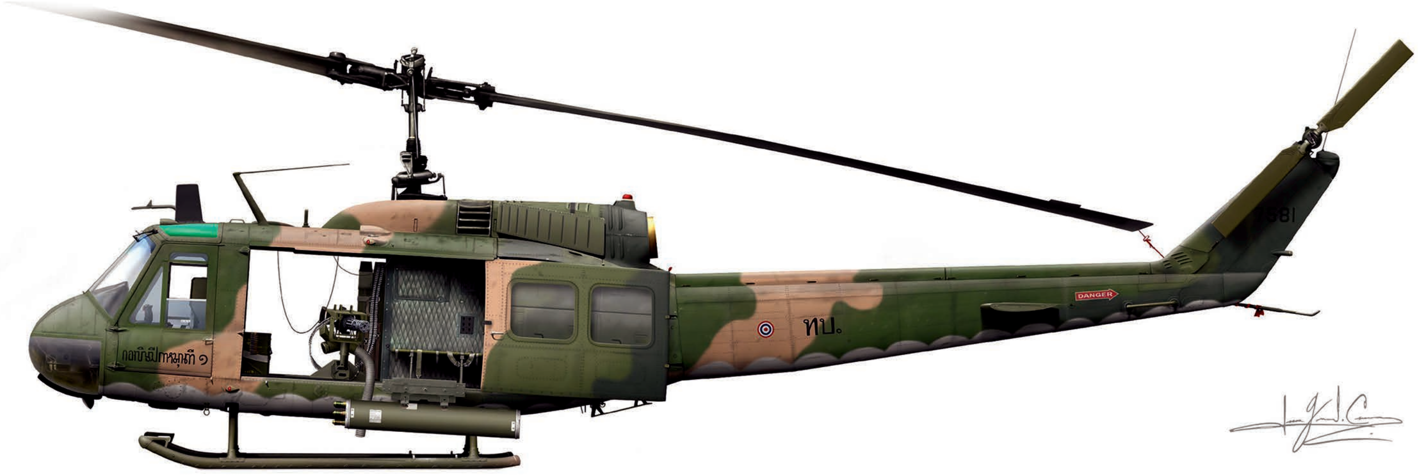
The most common main battle tank in service with the Royal Thai Army remains the M60A3 TTS, supplemented with 30 M60A1 RISE Passive, with both models purchased from the USA during the 1990s. These came equipped with batteries of smoke dischargers on either side of the turret, and T142 tracks with replaceable trackpads. M60A3 TTS – one of which is shown here – are recognisable by their crosswind sensor, installed atop the rear part of the turret. In recent years these have had extensive modifications to their electrical and electronic systems from Israel. (Artwork by David Bocquelet)



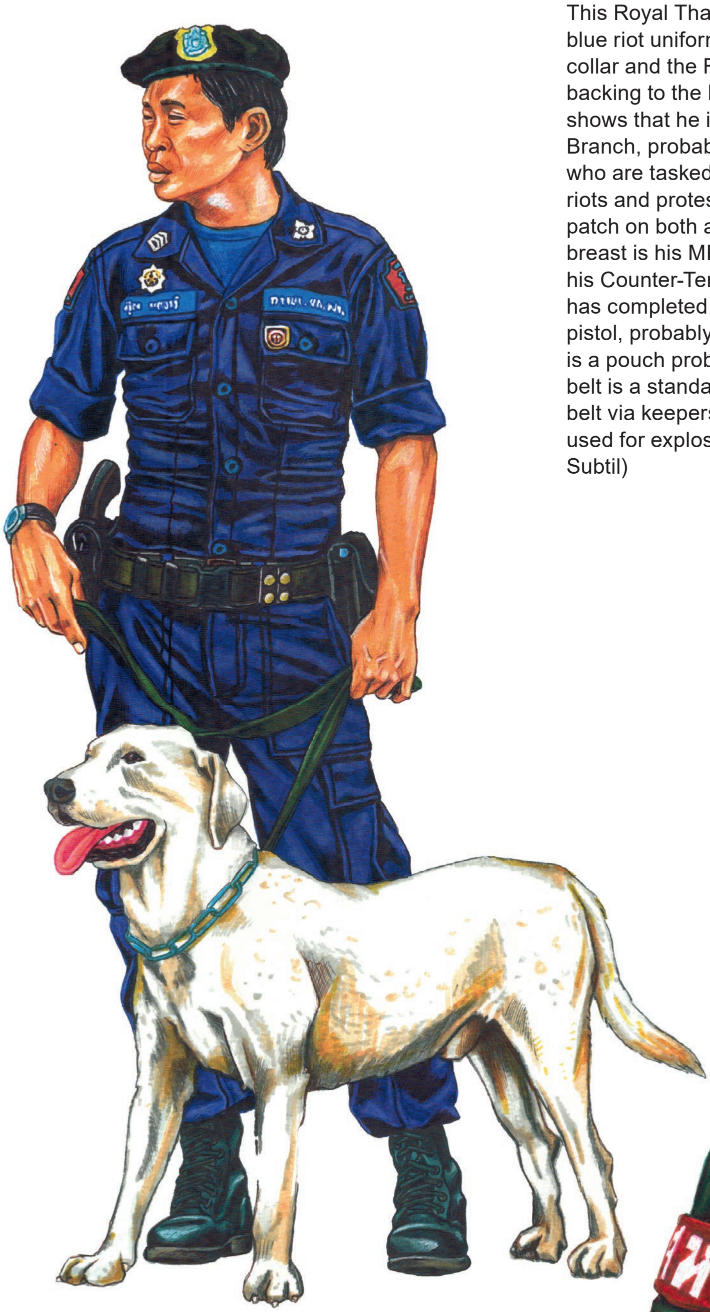
As of the early 2000s, the Royal Thai Police was operating a sizeable air wing, including four numbered divisions (1, 2, 3, and 4), and a total of 14 air bases and forward operating sites. Its 2nd Division, homebased at Bangkok/Ram Inthara Road, operates a number of Bell UH-1Hs, which were former mounts of the Royal Thai Air Force. They wore the typical livery in white overall, with dark red-brown cheat lines along the hull and the boom. Large service titles were always worn on the cabin doors, whilst national marking and serial numbers (in white) were usually applied on either side of the boom. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



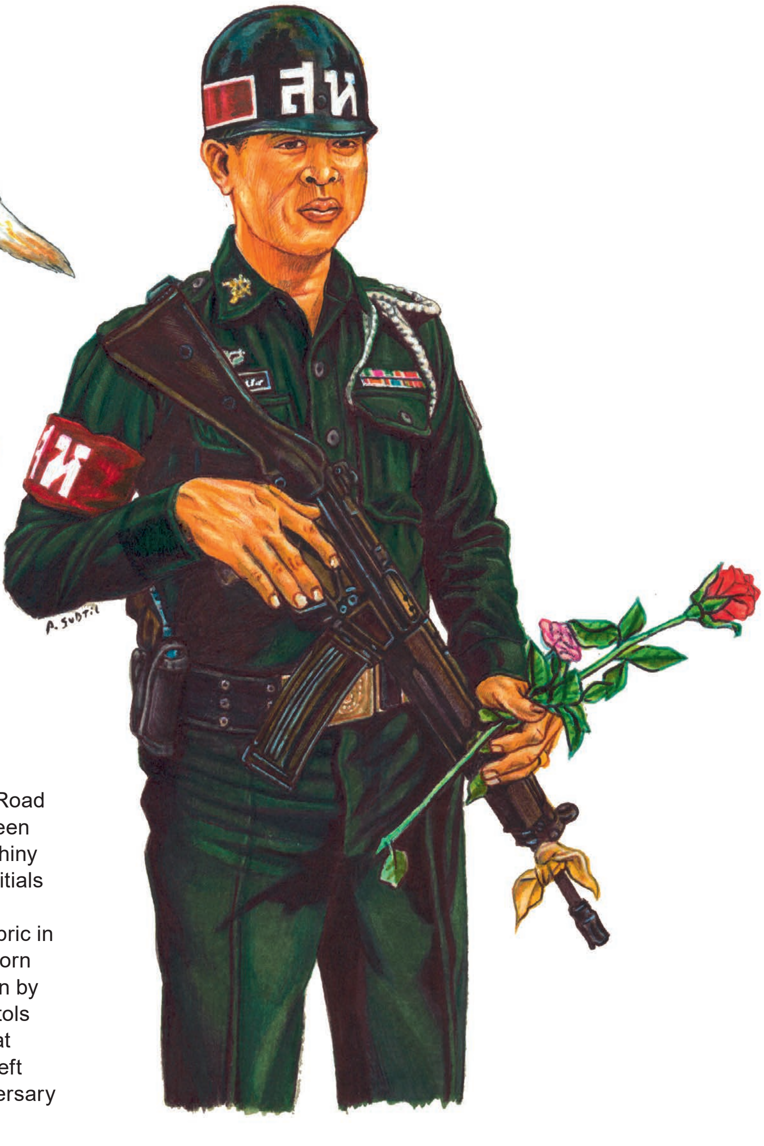
Through the early 2000s, the Royal Thai Police wing began reequipping with advanced and more powerful helicopters, including a miscellany of Bell 413EP/SPis and, since 2015–2019, a total of eight Bell 412EPis. Together with a number of Bell 206L-4s, Bell 429s, and Aerospatiale and Eurocopter helicopters, they were assigned to the 1st Division Royal Thai Police, homebased at Bangkok/Ram Inthara Road, and wore the same livery as earlier UH-1Hs. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



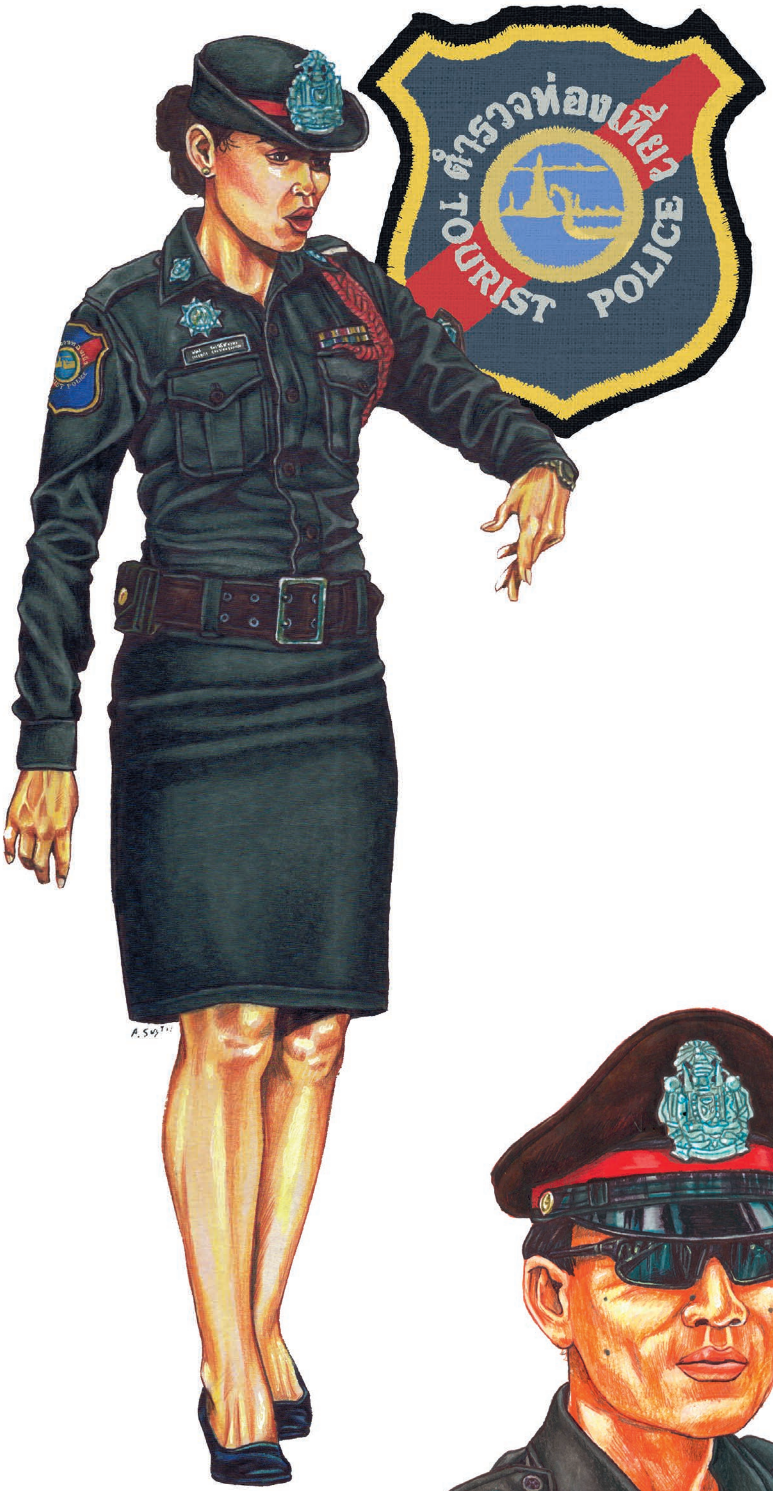
As of 2008–2015, No. 203 Squadron of the Royal Thai Army still had 16 UH-1Hs in operational service (in addition to eight Bell 412s and two Sikorsky S-92s). Homebased at Don Muang International, these included construction numbers 10087, 10827, 10828, 10927, 10195, 10198, 11029, 13028, and 13307 – usually applied in black on the fin. As illustrated here, they wore the South East Asia camouflage pattern in tan (FS30219), dark green (FS34079) and medium green (FS34102), on upper surfaces and sides, and light grey (FS36622) on undersurfaces. They can be armed with pintle-mounted mini guns and launchers for unguided rockets. (Artwork by Luca Canossa)



This Royal Thai Police Staff Sergeant is wearing the blue riot uniform. His rank is displayed on the right collar and the RTP cypher on the left. The yellow backing to the RTP badge on his black working beret shows that he is a member of the RTP's Special Branch, probably the Central Investigation Bureau who are tasked amongst other things with dealing with riots and protests. He wears the Tactical Division's patch on both arms. Above his name tape on his right breast is his MP badge, on his right breast pocket is his Counter-Terrorism Council badge, indicating he has completed the CT course. He carries a holstered pistol, probably a Colt, on his belt, and on his left hip is a pouch probably containing disposable gloves. The belt is a standard leather duty belt attached to his own belt via keepers. At his heel is his dog, a Labrador used for explosive searches. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)

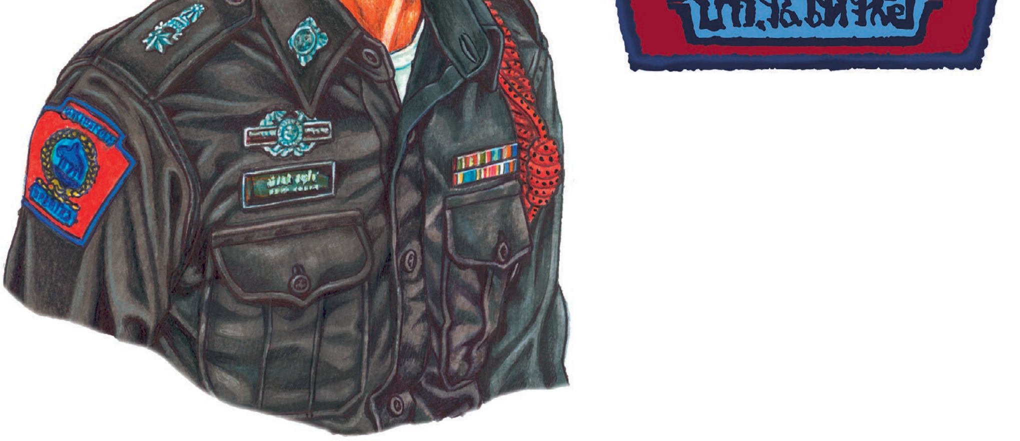


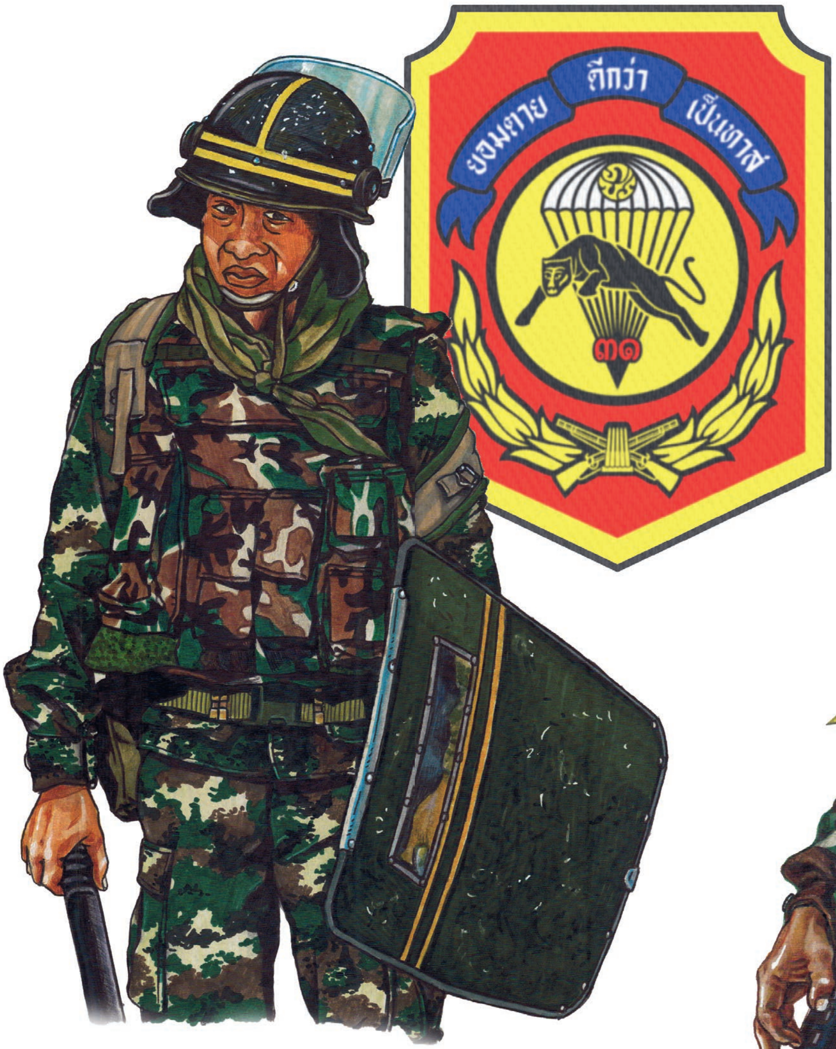
This Thai Military Policeman was seen on Silom Road during the 2006 Coup D'état. He wears a dark green working uniform. Both the red armband and the shiny dark green, nearly black, helmet carry the Thai initials ส.ห for MP. The weapon is a locally manufactured version of the HK G3 rifle with a small piece of fabric in the royal colour yellow tied near the muzzle, as worn by all coup participants. He is holding a rose given by a civilian supporter. A pair of crossed flintlock pistols adorn his MP collar badge and he wears a combat infantryman's badge over his name tape. On his left breast are the usual long service and royal anniversary ribbons. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)



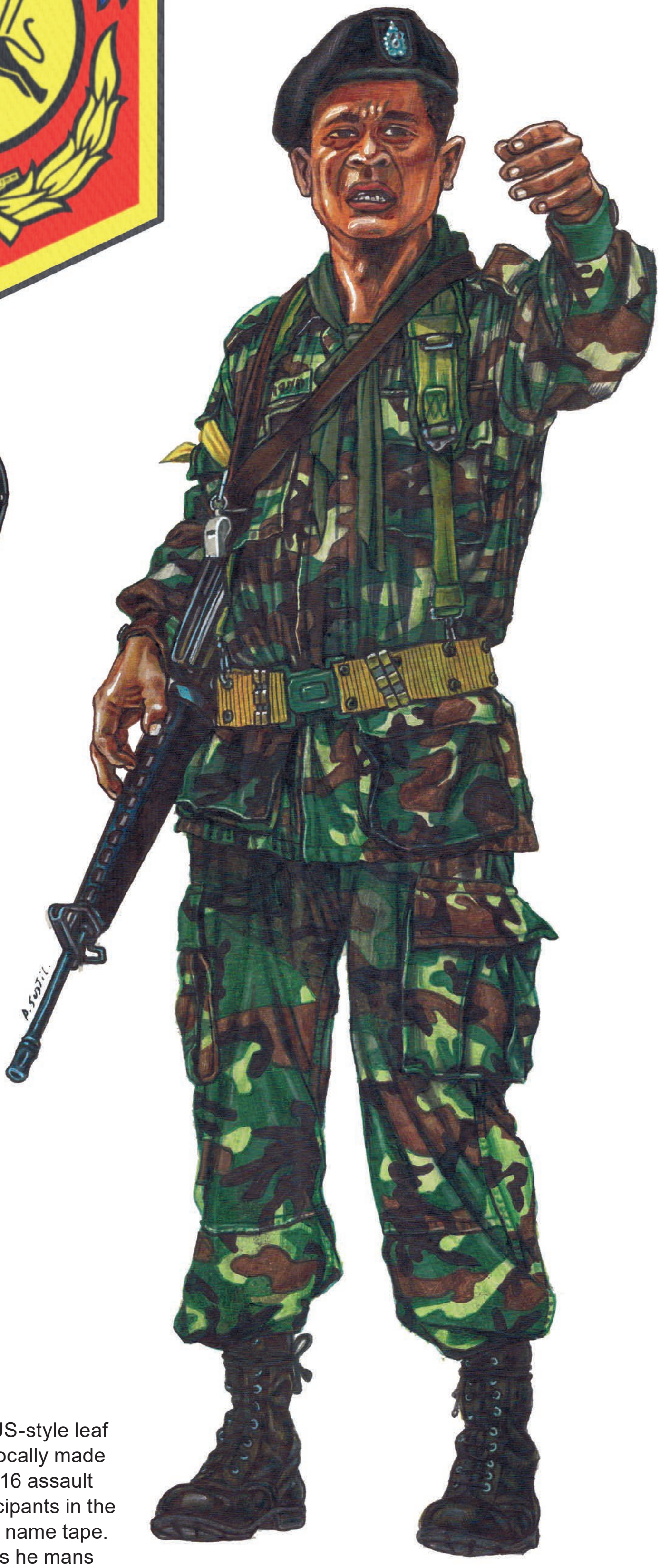
A female RTP Tourist Police officer in duty uniform, as often seen on duty at one of the many tourist attractions in Bangkok. The RTP Tourist Police daily duties include interacting with tourists, filling out lost/stolen item reports and acting as go between for the RTP and the public. This constable is wearing the RTP collar dogs and above her name plate has the crossed pistols indicating she has completed the MP course or has transferred across from the RTA. On her shoulder is the Tourist Police patch in English and Thai. On her left breast she has the standard royal anniversary ribbons and the RTP aiguillette in red and black. She wears a knee length skirt, an army style belt, and the female cap. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)

This RTP Major (Thai พันตำรวจตรี) wears the large RTP patch on his left arm (shown inset). The writing in Thai script states METROPOLITAN POLICE above an image of Rama IV on horseback, and NORTH DIVISION below). On his collar he wears the RTP collar dogs and diamond in silver metal with the RTP cypher. Above his name plate, over the right breast pocket, is the silver and black combat infantryman's badge, stating he has graduated from the RTA's advanced infantryman's course. Above his left breast pocket he wears the long service ribbons for the Order of the Elephant and Order of the Crown followed by the plethora of royal anniversary ribbons. On his shoulder the RTP aiguillette in red and black. The peaked hat has the silver RTP badge, with high crown to accommodate, and red hat band. In addition, he wears the commonly seen Ray-Ban sunglasses. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)

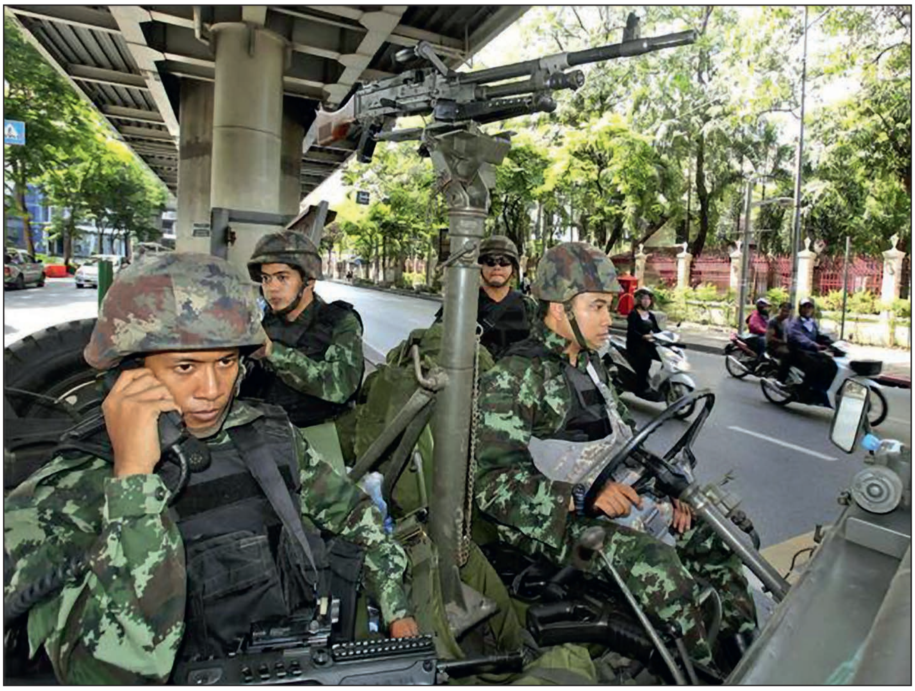

ตำรวจนครบาล
บก.น.เหนือ

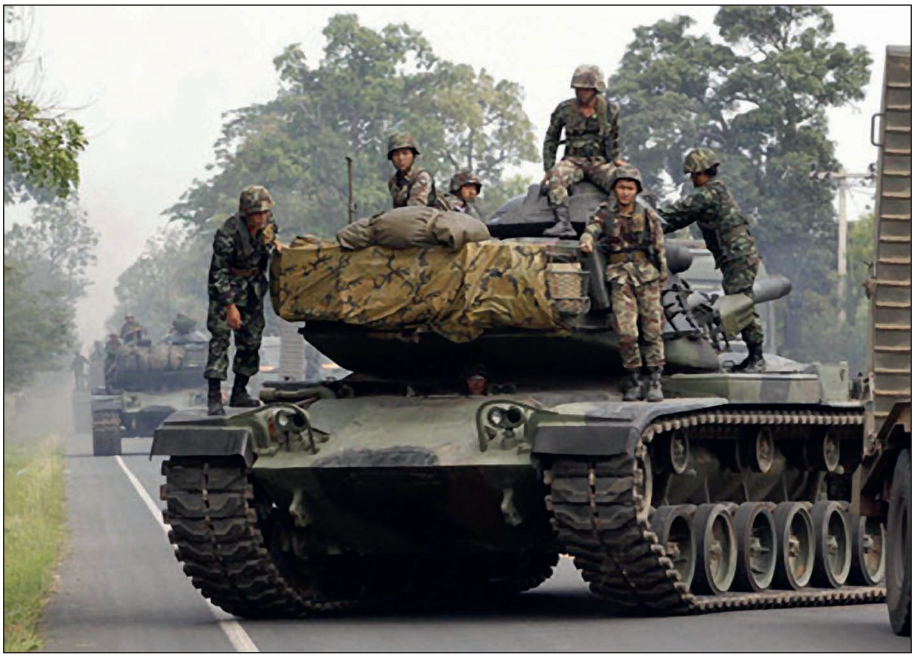

ยอมตาย
ดีกว่า
เป็นทาส
๓๑

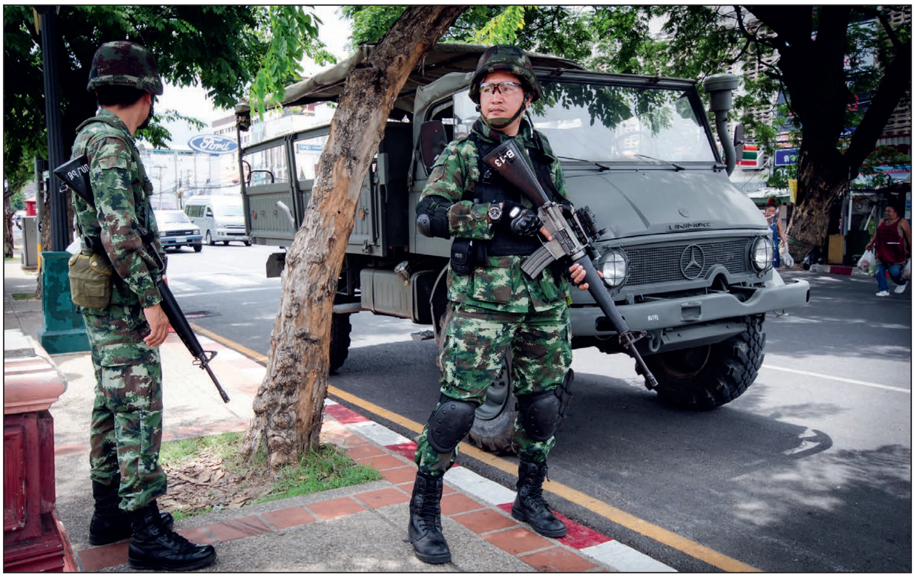
This private of the 35th Infantry Regiment (Airborne), 1st Battalion, Kings Guard, wears a US-style leaf camouflage uniform, as worn around the time of the PAD protests in 2007–08. He is equipped with a riot helmet, baton and shield for riot control duties. He is wearing a green scarf around his neck and body armour over his uniform that is bereft of badges and insignia. The airborne forces patch (shown inset) carries the motto ‘Death Before Dishonour’ over a black panther superimposed over a parachute. The airborne forces were the first RTA units to be deployed alongside the RTP during the PAD protests. All members of the 31st Regiment are airborne qualified. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)



This private of the Royal Thai Army seen during the 2006 coup wears a US-style leaf camouflage uniform with black working beret with standard RTA badge, locally made M4 belt and braces, and US-style jungle boots. He is equipped with an M16 assault rifle and has the royal colour yellow on his upper arm as worn by all participants in the coup to show their loyalty to the monarchy. On his right breast is a woven name tape. He is wearing a whistle attached to his webbing for traffic control duties as he mans one of the many roadblocks erected all around Bangkok and on its approach roads in the initial hours of the coup. (Artwork by Anderson Subtil)



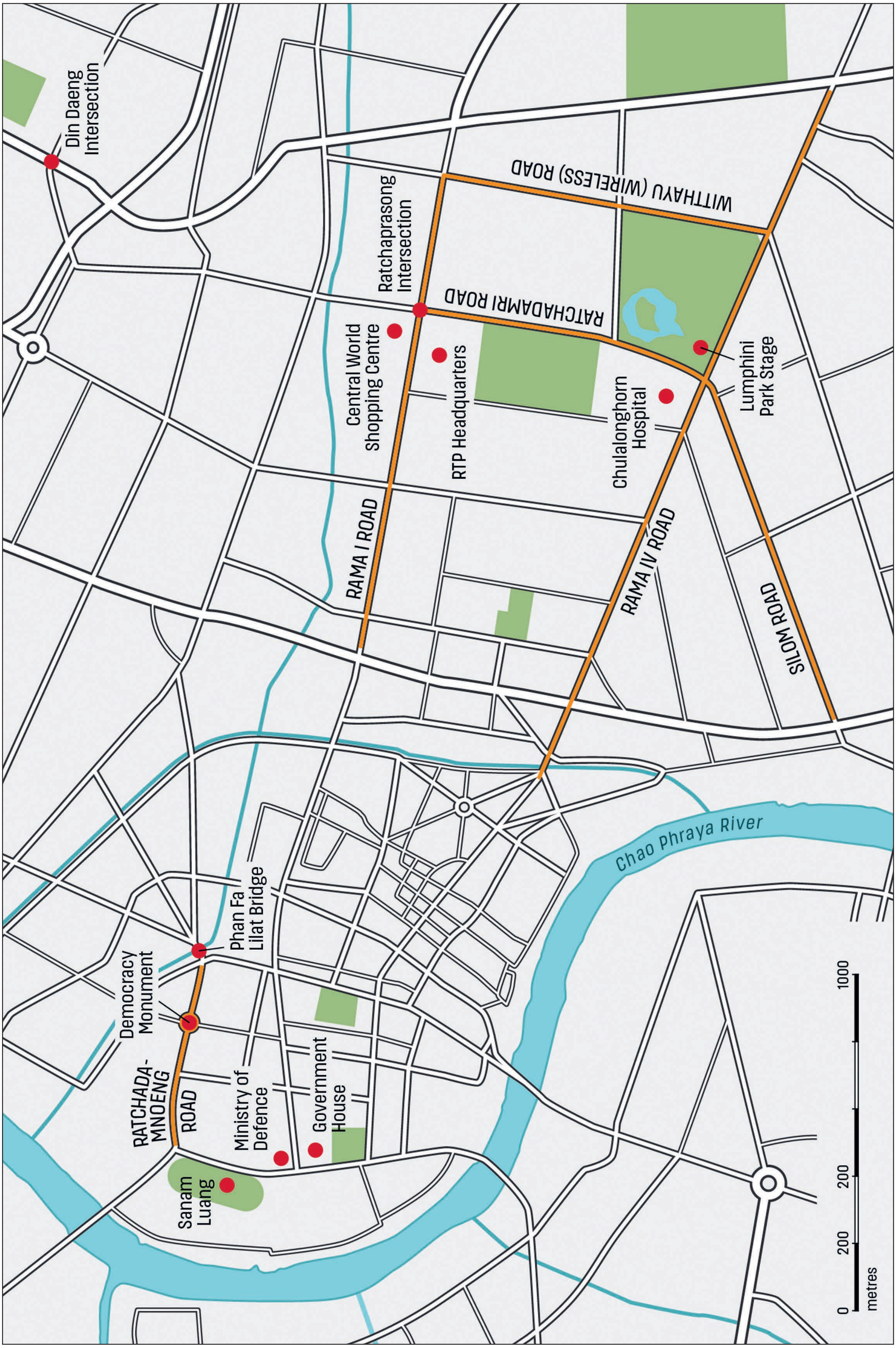




(Top) RTA troops in a M151 MUTT jeep blocking a Bangkok street during the 2006 coup. Note the soldiers wearing full camouflage uniforms and Kevlar helmets, and the pintle-mounted FN GPMG. (Photo courtesy nationreligionking)

(Middle) M60A3 main battle tanks of the RTA (here with turret turned towards the rear), made effective roadblocks and were widely used during the 2006 coup. (Official RTA photo, author's collection)

(Bottom) RTA soldiers armed with M16 rifles in front of an Unimog truck parked on Silom Road in Bangkok. (Author's collection)


Din Daeng Intersection
Ratchaprasong Intersection
WITTHAYU (WIRELESS) ROAD
RATCHADAMRI ROAD
Central World Shopping Centre
RTP Headquarters
Chulalongkorn Hospital
Lumphini Park Stage
RAMA I ROAD
RAMA IV ROAD
SILOM ROAD
Chao Phraya River
Phan Fa Lilat Bridge
Democracy Monument
RATCHADA-MNOENG ROAD
Ministry of Defence
Government House
Sanam Luang
0
200
200
1000
metres

Map of downtown Bangkok, with most important official buildings. (Map by Micky Hewitt)

Shinawatra (ทักษิณ ชินวัตร). The UDD had since coalesced into two camps, those openly supporting Thaksin and those against the Abhisit government, the PAD, and anybody else until elections were called.

Background to the Political Crisis 2008–2010

The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), being attacked by both the police and anti-PAD protesters, stepped up their own protests, seizing the government's temporary offices at Don Muan Airport and closing down Suvarnabhumi Airport. In December 2008 the Constitutional Court dissolved the Peoples Power Party (PPP) on charges of election fraud and levied similar charges against two of the coalition parties, dissolving the coalition. Prime Minister Wongsawat resigned. After heated negotiations, Abhisit Vejjajiva – leader of the Democratic Party – was voted in by a margin of 235 for, and 198 against.

The PPP supporters then formed an alliance and started protesting the rise of the Abhisit government in 2009, engaging in mass protests in Bangkok, sieging Government House once again and blocking major intersections within the city. PPP supporters also stormed the Fourth Asian Summit in Pattaya. A state of emergency was declared in Pattaya with the leaders of the protest being arrested as violence pervaded Bangkok.

Prime Minister Abhisit declared a state of emergency in Bangkok from the Interior Ministry building, and PPP protesters stormed the Ministry building looking for him. Abhisit's secretary and several guards were injured as a result. That evening the government called in the military to try and restore order. Violent clashes erupted between the Red Shirts and the local Bangkokians with burning tyres being seen all over Bangkok and houses being stormed by the Red Shirts.

PAD (Yellow Shirt) protesters outside Government House, Bangkok. (Open source)

2008 Yellow Shirt Protests

The PAD re-formed in March of 2008 and staged various street protests accusing the newly elected PM Samak Sundaravej of the Peoples Power Party of being a Thaksin Shinawatra puppet and opposing his proposal to amend the 2007 constitution. The main proposed change was the removal of Art.237 which necessitates the dissolution of a political party if one of its members was involved in vote buying. The executive of the PPP, Yongyuth Tiyapirat, was being tried for vote buying, and would be found guilty by the Supreme Court on 8 July 2008.

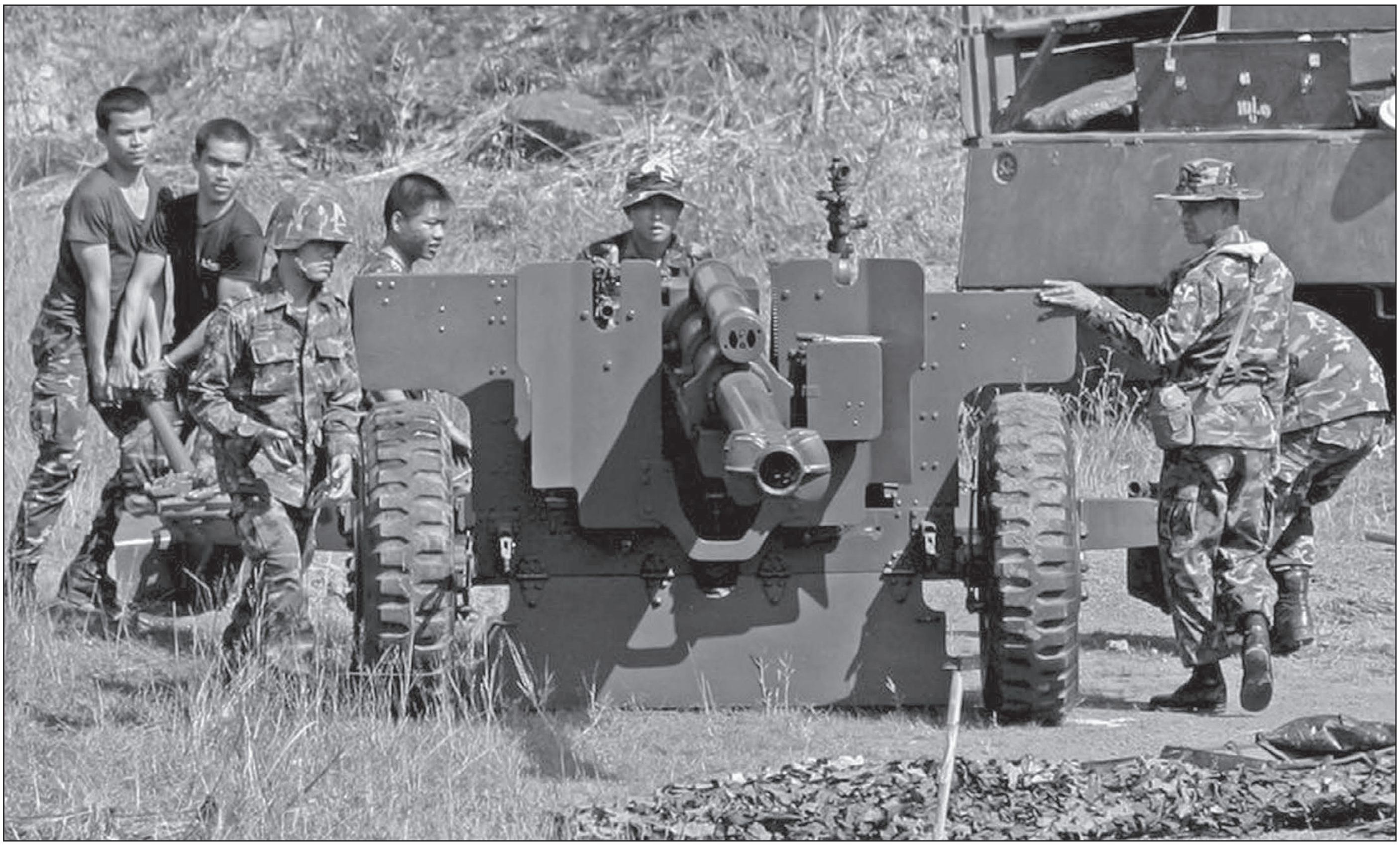
The PAD was also protesting the ties of some PPP members to the banned Thai Rak Thai Party and was also further protesting Samak's support of the Cambodian application to make the Preah Vihear Temple Complex a World Heritage Site. The temple lies near the Thai-Cambodian border, with land around the temple still under dispute, many scholars believed that Thailand would lose sovereignty over the land. The PAD asked for it to be jointly listed by UNESCO. Previously the temple had been the sight of a skirmish between Thai and Cambodian soldiers ending with the withdrawal of the Thai forces from the temple site after leaving several Cambodian soldiers dead and wounded in the clash.

Demonstrations resumed on 25 May 2008 at Democracy Monument on Ratchadamnoen Road. PAD supporters, protesting against the constitutional amendments had attracted 10,000 protesters and planned to march to Government House. However, they were attacked variously by pro-government protesters and stopped at Makkhawan Rangsan bridge by a large RTP barricade. The PAD settled in and started a continuous rally there. As the protest gathered momentum PM Samak addressed the nation on the government-run NBT TV channel stating his intention to dissolve the rally 'by force.'

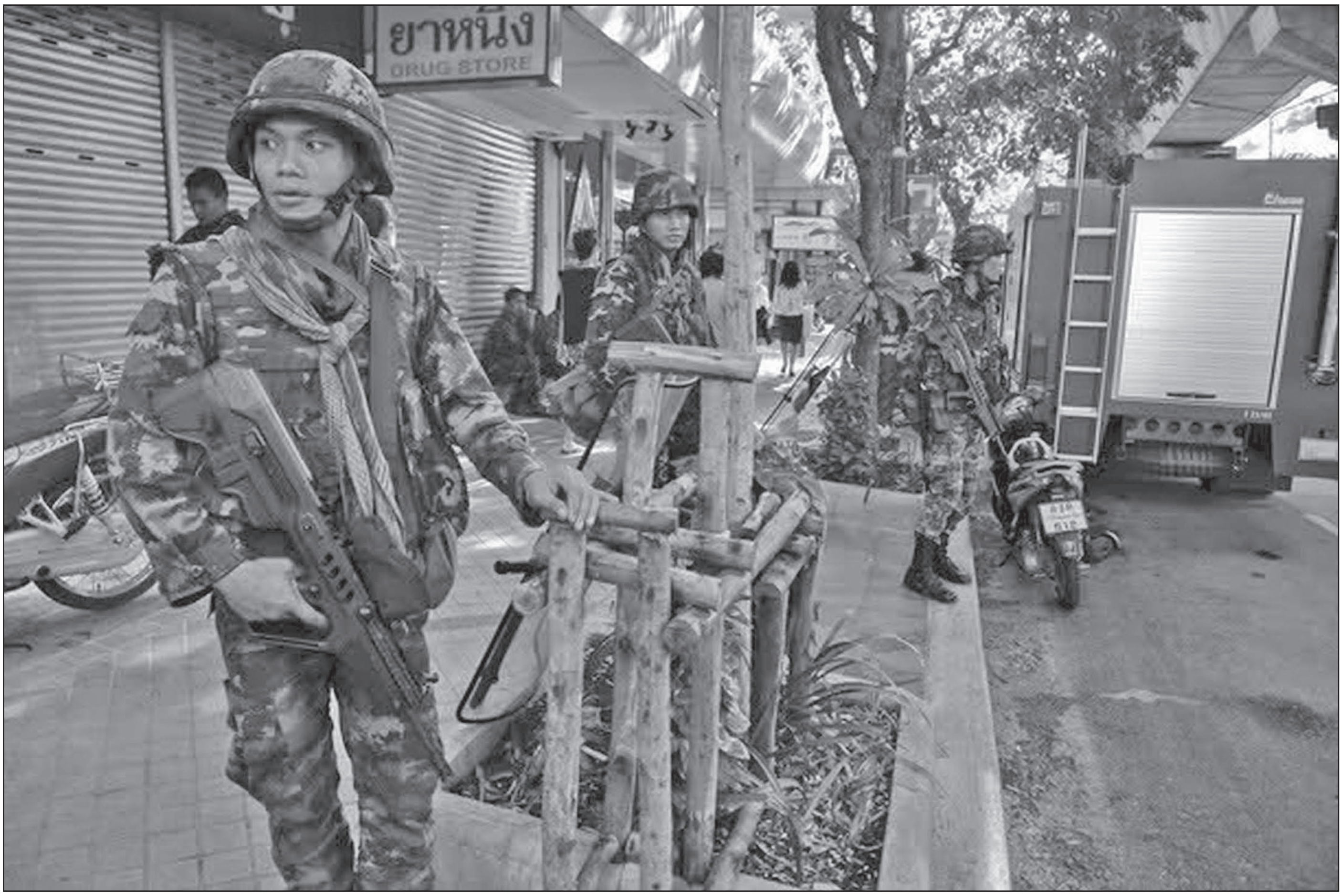
After the government survived a no confidence vote in June, the PAD proposed the constitution be amended to reduce the proportion of elected members to Parliament, claiming the rural population was not educated enough to vote for a non-Thaksin party. On 20 June, PAD supporters pushed through police blockades and erected a stage near Government House. The stage blocked Phitsanulok and Rama V roads, and caused disturbances to the local schools and traffic, so much so that a secondary school filed a lawsuit against the PAD, who appealed and lost. The PAD removed the stage and rebuilt it back at Makkhawan Rangsan Bridge on 8 July.

The RTP issued arrest warrants for Sondhi Limthongkul and eight protest leaders on charges of insurrection, conspiracy, unlawful assembly and refusing to disperse. General Anupong Paochinda stated that the RTA would not stage a coup and that the crisis should be resolved by political means. PM Samak called for an emergency parliamentary debate to be held on 31 August amidst widening protests.

On 31 August Police Lieutenant General Asawin Kwanmuang was transferred to an inactive position over his 'soft' handling



Thai soldiers manhandle a towed 105mm howitzer during the Preah Vihear border clash. (RTA official photo, author's collection)



RTA soldiers from Queen Sirikit's DiviCrisis – armed with Israeli-made Tavor assault rifles – during the PAD protests on Silom Road, Bangkok, 2008. (Authors collection)

Yellow Shirt protesters, the black guard, a hardline unit within the ranks of the PAD, August 2008. (Author's collection)

of the PAD protests, with operational command over removing protesters transferred to Police General Jongrak Juthanont. The PAD expressed fears that this would lead to bloodshed and more violence towards the RTP.

September 2008 Violence and seizure of Government House

By August the protests had escalated with PAD protesters seizing Government House as well as the National Broadcasting Services office. The offices of three ministers were also occupied by PAD protesters and major roads into Bangkok were blocked. The Prime Minister refused to resign, despite the PAD's repeated calls, and refused to remove the protesters by violent means. Despite a court order for their removal and warrants issued for nine of their leaders, the PAD remained in the government compound.

Riot police, unable to control the crowds clashed violently with protesters on 29 August at various locations within Bangkok, with train services being interrupted by the strike of the State Railway Workers Union, who were a loyal PAD ally. PAD protesters invaded and closed the airports of Hat Yai, Phuket and Krabi, though they later reopened on 30–31 August 2008. PM Samak called for an emergency session of Parliament on 31 August and refused to dissolve Parliament as suggested by his opposition. The State Enterprise Workers Union threatened to disrupt public infrastructure, including gas, water, and electricity supplies, and buses and communications, beginning on 3 September. Against this backdrop the UDD, calling themselves Red Shirts, started to gather in Sanam Luang in Bangkok, forming a large encampment.

Violence erupted on 3 September as PAD protesters and the UDD clashed in a melee involving guns, grenades, sticks and homemade weapons, leaving one dead and at least 43 injured. Prime Minister Samak declared a state of emergency by virtue of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in an Emergency Situation, BE2548 (2005). The following day, Samak appointed General Anupong Paochinda (Army Chief of Staff) in charge of remedying the state of emergency, with Police General Patcharavat Wongsuwan and Lieutenant General Prayuth Chan O-Cha (Commander, 1st Army Area) as his deputies. Gatherings of more than five people, distribution of literature and/or letters and nationwide press releases, and anything that could 'inflame' the situation were banned under the state of emergency.

A member of the Thai Human Rights Committee lodged a complaint with the Supreme Administrative Court against the enactment of the state of emergency on the grounds that events leading up to the enactment were not what could be constituted as an actual state of emergency *per se* and asked for it to be repealed. Allegations that Prime Minister Samak had hosted two TV cooking shows whilst Prime Minister were also filed with the court, leading to an emergency session on 12 September where the court found him guilty and relieved him of his premiership, with a new prime minister being appointed. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tej Bunnang, resigned as he did not agree with the government's actions leading to the revocation of the state of emergency on 14 September.

The PPP nominated Samak again as their candidate for Prime Minister as he was no longer a host on the cooking show, and

Samak Sundaravej on his popular TV cooking show. (Courtesy of ImportFood.com)

therefore there was no longer a conflict of interest. After many objections, the PPP withdrew Samak as a candidate and nominated the Deputy PM Somchai Wongsawat – brother-in-law of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra – as their candidate for PM. The PAD stated they would be happy for anyone to be Prime Minister as long as they were not from the PPP and nominated Abhisit Vejjajiva as their candidate. Somchai Wongsawat was elected Prime Minister on 17 September, winning 263 votes against Abhisit Vejjajiva's 163 votes.

The PAD resumed their protests, surrounding Parliament and barricading it to prevent the meeting to hear Samak's replacement, now alleging the government was nothing but a puppet of Thaksin.

October 2008 siege at Parliament House

PM Samak Sundaravej's government was facing difficulties as the top official in the PPP resigned his post. This came after the deputy leader Yingyut Tiyapirat was banned from politics for 5 years and another official was removed for illegally concealing his wife's assets. The Constitutional Court had already ruled that the entire Cabinet was in violation of the charter. Demands for Samak's resignation flooded in, to which he replied he would never resign. Within a few days 30,000 protesters had gathered and occupied Samak's Government House compound, forcing him to work from a nearby military command post. The RTP entered the compound and delivered a court order demanding the protesters leave, they suffered abuse and were tormented until they left.

On 5 October, as they left the voting booths for the Bangkok Governors' elections, Chamlong Srimuang, rally organiser Chaiwat Sinsuwongse, and eight other PAD leaders were arrested by the RTP under a 27 August arrest warrant for insurrection, rebellion and refusing orders to disperse. Chamlong refused bail in a move seen to encourage increased attendance at the PAD protest. At the Government House protest site, Sondhi Limthongkul stated demonstrations would continue and said: 'I am warning you, the government and police, that you are fuelling the fire'[1]

Subsequently, thousands of PAD protesters armed with homemade weapons arrived at Parliament House and erected razor wire barricades to prevent Somchai Wongsawat from attending his inauguration and delivering his policy speech, as mandated by the constitution within 15 days of swearing in. PAD protesters armed with homemade weapons stormed and occupied the main building, injuring security guards, and preventing Samak from delivering his parliamentary speech.

The RTP deployed a loudspeaker truck and announced that if the protesters did not disperse, tear gas would be fired. On 7 October 2008 at 6.00am, the RTP at Ratchawithi and Pichai Roads fired barrages of tear gas grenades and then clashed with the protesters in battles that would last all day. Eventually the doors to Parliament would be opened for the attending legislators, with the PAD forces regrouping around Parliament then blocking the gates again. The RTP forcibly created a corridor by firing tear gas canisters and using rubber bullets so that the legislators could leave, with clashes continuing into the night between the PAD and the police.

Over 100 protesters were injured, with some losing hands and legs, as various sources including the Bangkok Post and BBC reported. At first it was not clear if this was the result of faulty tear gas grenades, or the homemade ping-pong ball grenades the PAD were using. Dr. Pornthip Rojanasunand, director of the Central Institute for Forensic Science, used a detection device to try and identify the explosives; not finding any, she concluded that faulty Chinese-made tear gas canisters had caused the injuries. She also concluded that Miss Angkhana Radappanyawut was killed by an exploding tear gas canister striking her body. Afterwards

RTA troops string barbed wire across a street in Bangkok during the PAD protests in 2008 near a Red Shirt location. (Author's collection)

many major hospitals issued statements condemning the police for unnecessary brutality in the counterattack at Parliament House, with several doctors at prominent Bangkok hospitals refusing to provide medical treatment to wounded RTP officers. The PAD vowed to file charges against the RTP and the Government.

One PAD leader was killed when a bomb in his car exploded outside of the Chart Thai Party headquarters. Violent clashes continued, including the PAD assault on the Police HQ near Parliament House, until the leadership of the PAD called for calm and the return of the PAD protesters to their camps at Government House.

On 13 October, HM Queen Sirikit and Princess Chulabhorn, Army Chief Anupong Paochinda and opposition leader Abhisit Vejjajiva attended the funeral of Miss Angkhana, the protester killed in the violent clashes with the Royal Thai Police. The Queen was greeted with wild enthusiasm from the PAD protesters as she had previously donated one million Thai Baht to cover medical expenses incurred by the injured protesters. She stated that the girl had died in support of the monarchy and was 'a good person.'[2] The PAD claimed that the donations to cover medical expenses were the royal family's way of showing support for their actions, even though the money was also used for the treatment of the RTP wounded. The Queen's appearance at the funeral of the slain protester was seen by many as a royal seal of approval for the five-month-long street battle to oust the government. King Rama IX also donated money for medical expenses.

The area around Government House became a large open-air market, and sanitation started to become an issue. Mounds of rubbish started piling up, lack of toilets left a foul aroma in the air and clothing was hung up to dry. PAD 'security forces' would ruthlessly enforce their camp discipline and berate or chastise anyone they suspected of not 'pulling their weight' and put up posters of one woman they accused of being a prostitute because they found condoms in her purse.

November 2008 Closure of Suvarnabhumi and Don Muang airports

Thirty-five trains between the capital and the provinces were cancelled and protesters occupied Hat Yai, Krabi and Phuket International Airports resulting in over 118 flights being cancelled with protests and violence continuing. A large convoy of trucks carrying hundreds of PAD protesters blocked both ends of the road outside the terminal building and the road leading up to Suvarnabhumi Airport, the main airport for Bangkok and a major regional hub, on the evening of 25 November in what the PAD dubbed Operation Hiroshima. This was an effort to prevent the Prime Minister's return from an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Peru. PAD forces quickly overpowered the security guards and seized the terminal building where they erected a mobile stage from which the PAD leaders could denounce the government. The Prime Minister subsequently landed in Chiang Mai.

After hours of turmoil, Airports of Thailand (AoT) cancelled all domestic and international flights from the airports, leaving thousands of travellers stranded. The government called upon the RTA to restore order and open the airports. The next day, 26 November 2008, Army General Anupong Paochinda proposed that the PAD withdraw and for the government to resign, and if they did not comply 'social sanctions would be placed upon them'.[3] Neither the government nor the PAD protesters complied. At 4.30am three explosions were heard on the fourth floor of Suvarnabhumi Airport, followed by another at 6.00am: several people were injured in the blasts. It still remains unclear as to who set off the explosions and the PAD did not allow the RTP to investigate. Injunctions were consequently placed on 13 PAD leaders, ordering them to vacate the airports though PAD did not comply. AoT, which was planning on using U-Tapao military airbase as a replacement airport pleaded with the PAD leadership to release nearly 100 empty aircraft.

On 27 November the government declared a state of emergency and asked the RTP to clear the airports of protesters. The Royal Thai Navy was given the task of supporting the police at Suvarnabhumi Airport whilst the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) supported operations at Don Muang Airport. An RTA spokesperson stated that 'The army disagrees with using troops to resolve the issue, we do not want to do that and it is not appropriate to do that.'[4]

PAD leader Suriyasai Katasila replied that the PAD would fight off the police and that if the government wanted to clear them out then they should try it. The PAD also threatened to use the stranded travellers as human shields if the police or government tried to breach the airport and assigned 300–400 women to physically surround each PAD leader. It was also noted the PAD were paying people to join them, with extra payments to those bringing children. PAD leader Sondhi stated on ASTV that 'If we die today, I am willing to die, this is a fight for dignity.'[5] Sondhi also stated that he had received a call from an unspecified high ranking member of the government asking him to end the siege and he replied 'for 108 days we have protested together and suffered hardships whilst another group of people has remained in comfort, they cannot just ask us to suddenly stop protesting!'

The RTP established checkpoints around the perimeters of the airports and searched anyone entering the area, seizing an axe, 15 homemade guns and other weapons in a truck carrying 20 PAD protesters. At another checkpoint the RTP seized and Uzi sub machine gun, homemade guns, bullet proof vests, ammunition and homemade weapons in a vehicle marked with red crosses. At a checkpoint 2km from Suvarnabhumi, armed PAD protesters' vehicles attacked the police, forcing them to withdraw, capturing Police Sergeant Major Sompop Nathee, assigned to the BPP Region 1. He was taken into the airport and interrogated, and when journalists tried to follow him they were held back by the protesters.

The PAD kept the airports closed for eight days, moving additional protesters to the sites from the Government House camp to bolster their defences and numbers. The PAD only allowing one flight to the Haj, though they did apologise and offer food and water to the stranded travellers.

On 30 November at 3.50am, several gunshots echoed around Don Muang Airport coming from a warehousing complex within the airport itself, with an explosion occurring at a PAD tyre bunker at the main entrance to the airport a few minutes later. No one was injured. PAD protesters identified and captured a plain clothes RTP officer, repeatedly hitting her and dousing her in water, and punching and kicking her on a stage they had set up within the terminal building; eventually she was released and allowed to leave the airport terminal. The PAD blamed the RTP for the explosion and gunshots as part of a poorly co-ordinated attempt at recapturing the airport, something the RTP denied.

On 2 December the Constitutional Court of Thailand dissolved the three-party coalition on charges of electoral fraud. Members of the PPP went on to form the For Thais Party and declared the court's decision to absolve the government to be an unconstitutional judicial coup d'état. The PAD protesters at a conference later that day announced that they were lifting the blockade of the airports and ending their protests, with Sondhi Limthongkul stating 'our intentions and goals have been achieved' and that the PAD was ending all of their protests. Flights started to leave and arrive later the same day. On 15 December Abhisit Vejjajiva was elected as the new prime minister of Thailand.

2009 UDDT and PAD Protests

A video broadcast by ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in March 2009 claimed that Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda masterminded the 2006 coup and that, alongside other members of the Privy Council, Surayud Chulanot and Chanchai Likhitjittha, had conspired with the military in electing Abhisit as Prime Minister. Abhisit denied these claims, but in April hundreds of protesters in Bangkok demanded Abhisit resign, and his co-conspirators resign from the Privy Council.

With the slogan '*Khon Anmat* (down with the nobles)' Thaksin openly called for a people's revolution to overthrow the *amatayathipatai* (the traditionalist government run by nobles and/or elitists) of the Abhisit government. Hundreds of National United Front for Democracy (UDD) supporters began their mass protests on Wednesday 8 April with 100,000 demonstrators descending upon Government House, overspilling to the nearby Royal Plaza by the evening. The UDD also claimed via a video broadcast that the Privy Council under Prem Tinsulanonda, the RTA and the PAD had conspired together to ensure that Abhisit became prime minister, as well as having masterminded the 2006 coup. The PM denied the accusation, but thousands protested in Bangkok in early April demanding his resignation, as well as the resignations of privy members Surayud and Chanchai, who were named as co-conspirators.

With the UDD's call for a revocation of the 2007 constitution, its call for Abhisit's resignation and an end to 'elitist' meddling in politics, the UDD was seen by some critics as being essentially anti-royalist, a view firmly encouraged and supported by the PAD protesters. Homing in on that was perceived as an anti-royalist message in the UDD's protests the PAD turned the issue of corrupt politics into an issue of anti-monarchism.

Pattaya Protests

On 7 April, PM Abhisit was travelling back from the 14th ASEAN Summit being held at Pattaya when his cortege was stopped by police at a red light, here they asked him to transfer from his armoured limousine to another, unarmoured, vehicle. Red Shirt protesters who were following were suddenly in range of the Premier's car and managed to break the rear windscreen before the Premier and his escort could flee the scene.

The ASEAN summit was being held amidst fiercely growing protests from the UDD and the PAD. The Chinese representative was blockaded in his hotel by protesting red-shirted taxi drivers of the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship. In the afternoon of the same day, whilst the UDD headed towards the hotel where the summit was being held, violent clashes broke out between the red-shirted protesters and blue-shirted government supporters. Sticks, Molotov cocktails, small bombs and rocks were used, as quoted in *The Straits Times*, and the red-shirted protesters stormed the hotel and took control of the building, forcing the ASEAN summit to be cancelled, the Thai government to flee, and the ASEAN leaders to be evacuated by helicopter under heavy armed guard to a nearby military base (that had been used in place of Suvarnabhumi Airport during the airport's seizure by the PAD protesters in 2008). Enacting emergency powers, the Prime Minister declared Pattaya and Chonburi to be in a state of emergency on 11 April. He also authorised the RTA to take control of the situation, eventually dispersing the protesting groups.

The PAD issued a statement asking for PM Abhisit to resign and for him to dismiss Suthep Thaugsuban (his Deputy PM in charge of security), defence minister General Prawit Wongsuwan and the chiefs of Thailand's navy, police and army for failure to contain the UDD and for allowing the ASEAN summit to be cancelled. PAD leader Chamlong Srimuang held a press conference and stated that 'if the government cannot help the country, then the PAD will come out and do the job for them.'

Protests in Bangkok

Small protests erupted throughout Bangkok during the week-long Songkran Festival (Thai Lunar New Year) that started on 9 April. Red-shirted protesters used cars, trucks and buses to blockade and control several areas of the metropolis, including using an LPG tanker at the Din Daeng intersection, a major intersection of various motorways and through-routes in northern Bangkok. Small clashes escalated between pro-government protesters, the Red Shirts, and the local population. In one example, a yellow-shirted woman drove her car into an angry mob of red-shirted protesters, injuring several before driving away.

PM Abhisit declared a state of emergency for the metropolis and surrounding area and denounced the anti-government protesters (the Red Shirts) as 'National enemies.'[6] On 12 April 2009, he enacted powers to censure television broadcasts and the newspapers from reporting on the protests as clashes were growing increasingly violent between the areas under Red Shirt control and Yellow Shirt demonstrators. Ousted Prime Minister Thaksin, who broadcast daily on a D-Station, now was urging King Bhumibol to intervene.

The Ministry of Interior Riot

Tensions were at a peak on 12 April 2009, after the RTP arrested the leaders of the UDD protesters that had stormed the summit hotel in Pattaya. Red Shirt protesters now blockaded the Criminal Court with the intention of getting their leaders released.

On the afternoon of the 12th, after the announcement of the state of emergency by the Abhisit government, hundreds of Red Shirt protesters at the Ministry of the Interior broke down the gates and stormed the compound, surrounding the Prime Minister's vehicles. Abhisit escaped unharmed, whilst his secretary in a following car was hit and all his windows smashed, with the secretary and driver being taunted and humiliated by the crowd. One of the Prime Minister's security guards was paraded and 'presented' on the Red Shirts' stage.

Large crowds of protesters continued to meet on the streets, with a large crowd gathering outside of the Prime Minister's office where barricades were constructed in an attempt to block the military from gaining access. At one point protesters gained access and stormed the Ministry of the Interior where they engaged in a pitched battle with members of the military, during which time numerous warning shots were fired. Barricades at important road junctions were constructed and one railway station was blockaded. UDD protesters commandeered buses and two armoured cars were captured. Access to several important government buildings was blocked. The BBC reported that at least two protesters had been killed in the scuffle at the Ministry of the Interior, with several others being arrested, though Thai TV made no mention of deaths.

On the morning of 13 April 2009, Royal Thai Army units in full combat gear stormed the Din Daeng intersection, near the Victory Monument, held by UDD protesters, using tear gas, live ammunition and training rounds to clear the intersection where the protesters had been threatening to blow up the captured LPG tanker. Seventy protesters were injured in the action. Live rounds were fired directly at protesters who were threatening life, and at those armed with bombs and guns.

The government blocked and closed down the D-Station owned and operated by ousted Premier Thaksin and also shut down and searched various local radio stations on the suspicion that they were assisting the UDD protesters. Arrest warrants were issued not only for the ousted Prime Minister but also for 13 of the Red Shirt leaders, some of whom voluntarily gave themselves in to the police on 14 April to end the escalating violence. Protesters at the main site near Government House broke camp and peacefully returned to the provinces aboard government-provided buses.

Early in the morning of 17 April, the leader of the PAD, Sondhi Limthongkul, was shot in an ambush on his convoy. Gunmen sprayed his car with M16 and AK47 rifle-fire after shooting the tires out. Sondhi and his driver were seriously wounded, the attackers escaping after the chase car with is security detail opened fire on them. Sondhi suffered a wound to his head and survived subsequent surgery. His son, Jittanart Limthongkul, stated that elements within the Thai army and the Abhisit government were behind the attempted assassination. Privy Councillor Charnchai Likijitta had previously stated he had been the target of an assassination attempt. The Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Sanan Kachornprasat, a close aide to the Deputy Prime Minister and a senior member of the Chart Thai Pattana Party (a coalition partner of the Democrats), on charges of masterminding the assassination attempt against Charnchai, although a senior PAD leader stated that it was in fact ousted Prime Minister Thaksin who was behind the attempts.

On 21 April, Abhisit declared a media war against any UDD claims of improper conduct by the government during the protests. The government produced millions of video CDs giving its views on the protests and its actions. The media censorship was finally lifted on 24 April. The UDD protested that their treatment, in contrast to the pro-government PAD was unfair, arrest warrants being issued hours after the government cracked down on the UDD, but warrants were yet to be issued for the PAD protest leaders who occupied the airports months before. Over 120 protesters were injured in the rioting and at least 11 killed, with 10 million Baht of damages incurred against property, including 31 city buses.

CHAPTER 4

THE POLITICAL CRISES OF 2010–2014 AND THE 2014 COUP

2010 Red Shirt Protest

Throughout 2009 opposition to Abhisit Vejjajiva's government swelled, mainly due to the banning of the PPP (*Phak Phalang Prachachon*/People's Power Party) in December 2008, with its MPs given 60 days to reform into new parties.

On 1 February 2010 bags of fermented fish and human excrement were thrown at PM Abhisit's house, with the Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban blaming the Red Shirt protesters. The RTP arrested a culprit who confessed that he was upset with the indifference the RTP were showing to his continual reporting of people smoking near his house.

By the evening of 15 February, the RTP and the RTA had established scores of checkpoints and special patrols in the centre of Bangkok in response to the threat level being raised in anticipation of continued violence or protests resulting from the upcoming verdict of the courts on whether the assets of Thaksin Shinawatra should be seized. The verdict was delivered on 26 February and passed without incident. The RTP reported that assets totalling 46 billion Thai Baht were seized by the Thai government from former PM Shinawatra on 27 February 2010. The UDD did not protest at the time as expected but announced protests would start on 14 March. That evening several grenades were thrown from the back of a motorcycle outside three branches of the Bangkok Bank in protest. In early March Red Shirt protesters once again descended upon Bangkok and poured human blood, donated by the protesters, outside Abhisit's home and demanded his resignation.

The RTP and RTA established checkpoints around Bangkok to inspect anyone entering the capital, especially caravans of protesters arriving from north-east or north-west Thailand, with orders to arrest anyone with weapons. Deputy PM Suthep warned the Cabinet that they may become targets of the UDD and that there was no truth that there was a rumoured list of names with over 200 pro-Thaksin supporters and relatives on it but did admit that the government had 10 leaders of the Pheu Thai Party under surveillance and accused the UDD of hiring people to protest. Prompong Nopparit, a UDD spokesperson at the time, denied the claim but it was later proven to be true. Prompong called for the government to disband and for Abhisit to resign.

The government established a tactical operations centre – the Centre for the Administration of Peace and Order (ศอ.รส.) – in anticipation of the 14 March protests, at the HQ of the 11th Infantry Regiment in Bangkhen under the control of the Internal Security Operations Command; a mixture of Royal Thai Police and Army personnel. PM Abhisit informed the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration that he had intelligence that a hardline group of 2,000 protesters – a core unit within the Red Shirts – would be part of the protest and that he had intelligence of two planned bomb attacks, and of grenade attacks at 30 to 40 locations, and that the protesters were going to blockade government buildings and

HILUX
สภ. เมืองชัยนาท
VIGO
ขน 1725
POLICE

RTP checkpoint outside Bangkok in 2010. (Author's photograph) the residences of important figures within the government. When Army Colonel Sansern Kaewkamnerd was questioned on the nature of this intelligence, he reported the RTA had no knowledge of such plots. The UDD challenged Abhisit to prove his allegations.

The government revealed that explosives and up to 6,000 assault rifles had been stolen from the 4th Army Engineer Battalion in Patthalung on 7 March and moved to Bangkok to 'incite violence and unrest,' and that a raid on a car components factory had revealed parts that could 'potentially be used to launch M79 grenades,' showing that there were indeed violent elements among the Red Shirts. The UDD denied such allegations, with UDD leader Nattawut Saikua saying the Army had staged the thefts to pin the blame on the UDD. The RTP later stated that there was no real evidence to suggest that the stolen components were particularly suspicious or linked to the UDD.

The government deployed a 50,000-strong security force to Bangkok drawn from elements of the RTP, BPP and some RTA as they enacted an Internal Security Act (ISA) to run from 11–23 March. All security personnel within the capital would carry only batons and shields, with only SWAT and rapid reaction forces having firearms during the period of the ISA. The PM and Deputy moved into a safe house at the tactical operations centre in the 11th Infantry Regiment HQ.

In the early morning of 12 March five bombs exploded in Surat Thani, though causing no injuries. No arrests were made. RTP and RTA checkpoints were established on all major routes into the capital and bus companies were told their licenses could be revoked if they were found to be transporting protesters.

Estimates vary on the number of Red Shirt UDD protesters that descended upon Bangkok on 14 March, mainly from the north and north-east of Thailand, ranging from the government's estimate of 50,000 to the UUD's estimate of 300,000 (figures that may obviously have been inflated). Thai TV channels reported that there were only 25,000 protesters within Bangkok. Protesting was mainly centred around the Phan Fa Lilat Bridge, some 400 metres from the Democracy Monument on Ratchadamnoen Road and roughly 250 metres from the Golden Mount temple. The Red Shirts demanded that Abhisit resign and called for an early election. When the government refused dozens of M79 grenade attacks occurred around Bangkok, though no injuries were sustained and no one was arrested for them.

On 15 March, a caravan of Red Shirts proceeded towards the command and control centre at the 11th Infantry Regiment HQ, prompting the PM to leave the barracks by helicopter. The next day, 16 March, Red Shirts dumped bags of blood, donated by the protesters, at Government House and other sites throughout Bangkok in a symbolic gesture.

On 20 March, up to 100,000 demonstrators according to some sources (the number is put between 10,000 and 30,000 by government sources) paraded 46km through Bangkok in a 10km-long convoy of cars, brightly coloured rice trucks, taxies and motorcycles in a peaceful protest that was designed to gain the support of the local population. Those participating had travelled from the provinces and rumours abounded they had been paid up to 2,000 Baht each to attend, accusations the Red Shirts denied vehemently. Some local support was seen from red-shirted bystanders blowing whistles and waving flags.

The caravan of protest was repeated on 27 March, with the protesters travelling to several locations throughout Bangkok where troops were stationed, forcing the troops to withdraw. Deputy PM Suthep called the withdrawals 'temporary adjustments.' Meanwhile the protesters expanded their protest site at Ratchaprasong Intersection in imitation of the tactics used by the Yellow Shirts (PAD) back in 2006. The government tried to evict the protesters from their encampments without court orders, which failed. Several bombings occurred throughout Bangkok, with no one claiming responsibility, no injuries or deaths resulting, and no culprits found. In two separate incidents vehicles were driven into the protesting crowds at Ratchaprasong Intersection and one further down on Silom Road. Several injuries were caused before the vehicles drove off, the one at Ratchaprasong receiving broken windows from the protesters wielding bats, staves and tires.

By 3 April 2009, protesters had occupied the Ratchaprasong Intersection in Bangkok, triggering a state of emergency to be declared on 8 April banning any assemblies of more than five persons, allowing the authorities to arrest and detain anyone seen as a threat. The RTA barricaded the uplink station of the ThaiCom Satellite to stop it broadcasting 'inciteful programming', namely the UDD-sponsored *People Channel*, a free-to-air channel supporting the Red Shirts and broadcasting anti-government propaganda and running advertisements calling for donations to the UDD. On 9 April a group of protesters descended upon the uplink site and tear gas was fired, prompting the group to storm the building and forcing the RTA to withdraw. Negotiations resulted in the government allowing the station to resume broadcasting and the protesters left the building, resulting in the government blocking the signal again.

On 10 April the Red Shirts seized a government TV station, demanded that Abhisit resign, and renewed a call for elections within 30 days. In what was to be known as Cruel April (เมษาโหด) by the Thai media, the RTA moved against the Red Shirt encampment at Democracy Monument/Phan Fa Bridge, with live rounds being fired near the Makkhawan Bridge close to the Bangkok office of the United Nations (UN); they were pushed back by the protesters throwing rocks and bamboo spears. The RTA, likely troops from 2nd Division, Queen Sirikit's Guards, returned fire tear gas and with live ammunition from their Tavor rifles in a fighting retreat.

As night fell, fighting intensified around Thanom Dinse, Khao San Road and Khok Wua Intersection, with army units equipped with M16s firing live rounds, rubber bullets and tear gas at the Red Shirts. By 9pm on 11 April the RTA had to retreat as they could not break through the protesters' lines, leaving 24 dead – including five soldiers – and over 800 civilians and military wounded. The RTP reported that the toll as 18 killed, including the five soldiers. Included in that figure was Japanese Reuters journalist, Hiro Muramoto, who had filmed a grenade attack that killed RTA Colonel Romklao Thuwatham in charge of the operation, and wounded several other top army officers. This latter event led to the RTA withdrawing. The soldiers that died had experienced cerebral oedemas caused by being struck on the head by rocks. In the aftermath the RTA returned to their barracks whilst the protesters held memorials for those killed and erected stronger barricades out of tires and bamboo, renewing their calls for elections.

The UDD claimed that several protesters were actually shot and killed by snipers on neighbouring buildings and that there were no protesters armed with anything other than rocks, bamboo spears and petrol bombs; a claim the RTA refuted stating that grenades as well as automatic weapons were fired from the protester's lines at their troops. The RTA claimed that Black Shirts – an armed paramilitary core within the Red Shirt camp – had put up the stiffest resistance firing upon the RTA and RTP with M16s, AKs and M79 grenade launchers, such as the type of launcher used to attack and kill Colonel Romklao.

After the RTA's withdrawal, protesters claimed to have captured large quantities of weapons, including Tavors, several armoured personnel carriers which were burned out and abandoned (some sources quote six, but it is hard to quantify), three Humvees and a large quantity of ammunition of all types, with over 8,000 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition as well as batons, riot shields and body armour left behind or lost by the RTA.

On 12 April, as the Election Commission of Thailand called for the dissolution of the Democratic Party and for elections to be called, the RTA advanced on the Red Shirts' encampment firing live ammunition, tear gas and smoke. Clashes erupted, with the protesters being driven back and throwing rocks, concrete chunks, bamboo spears and using homemade catapults against the advancing RTA. By daybreak the RTA was still embattled with the protesters, repeatedly charging their positions; the protesters kept regrouping behind their burning barricades throwing objects at the RTA and then resorting to throwing petrol bombs. On 14 April still, whilst battling the government security forces, the protesters stated they would all regroup at a single protest site for the coming 'final battle'.

The authorities moved in to arrest the Red Shirt leaders at a Bangkok hotel – the SC Park – on 16 April, with the protest leaders escaping out of a window on a rope as the RTP laid siege to the hotel. Despite the raid being unsuccessful, rumours widely circulated that this was just the beginning of a wider crackdown by the government. Deputy PM Suthep stated that 'innocent civilians need to leave the protests as the government has to take decisive action' leading to fears of a wider crackdown. The protesters were emboldened by the evasion of arrest by their leadership and rallied around the capital. Mindful of the death toll of 10–11 April, the authorities sent in the RTP – rather than the Army – to stop them. Jamlong Srimuang, the Yellow Shirt (PAD) leader, threatened to 'take matters into our own hands' if the government did not solve the situation within seven days. With tensions rising again, the RTA returned to the streets of Bangkok whilst the Red Shirts strengthened their barricades and armed themselves with homemade weapons. Several M79 grenade attacks occurred on government buildings, though resulting in no injuries. By 15 April the death toll had risen to 24 killed with the Prime Minister vowing to 'restore normalcy by any means', he subsequently relieved Suthep of his security responsibilities and appointed the commander of the RTA, General Anupong Paochinda, in his place on 16 April.

Pro-government demonstrations of 'no colour' or 'multicolour shirts' started around Bangkok. To begin with these were peaceful, then the two groups clashed on 21 April at the beginning of Silom Road, with a small group breaking off and walking through police lines to throw stones and bottles at the Red Shirt lines, who responded with fireworks. The pro-government demonstrators called on the police to 'Fight! Fight!' but garnered no response and withdrew. The following day the Yellow Shirt leadership called upon Abhisit to allow the RTA 'to take firmer action, if they do not then we will step into the conflict to push the Red Shirts out'.

On 22 April, around 8pm, three 40mm grenades were fired from an M79 launcher at the BTS Sala Daeng Station on Silom Road, another grenade landed near the Dusit Thani Hotel, and another near a bank. In total three people were killed and 86 others injured, including four tourists at the Lumphini Park protest site. This was the first time that grenade attacks had been carried out in densely populated areas as previously they had been isolated incidents resulting in no injuries. It was believed by the Red Shirts that the grenades had been fired from Chulalongkorn Hospital and they stormed the hospital looking for the culprit, drawing widespread condemnation for their antics in the Thai media. RTP forensic expert Pornthip Rojanasunand determined that the grenade may, or may not, have been fired from the hospital. Deputy PM Suthep stated that 'the M79 has a range of 400m and anyone can see it was clearly fired from behind the King Rama IV Monument [at Lumphini, opposite the hospital] where the Red Shirt's stage is.' No arrests were forthcoming amongst those who stormed the hospital, or for anyone carrying out the grenade attack. The UDD Red Shirts started to develop a more siege-like approach, building a fortress out of tires, bamboo spears and other barricade material around the vicinity of Ratchaprasong and Silom roads, patrolling the camp with armed guards and calling for elections in three months, which was rejected by Abhisit.

Veera Musikapong, a Red Shirt leader, offered to end the protest on 23 April if the government 'agrees to disband Parliament within 30 days and hold elections', asked that protest sites not be attacked during any negotiations, and an independent enquiry should be launched into the deaths of protesters. PM Abhisit spoke with the protesters but rejected the terms as violence was threatened and implied, and that any dissolution of Parliament should be enacted with the whole country's interests at heart and not just those of the Red Shirt minority. Meanwhile pro-democracy supporters started to rally and create their own encampments, massing for demonstrations. On the 25th, with another day of violence closing with one more dead and dozens wounded, PM Abhisit went on Thai national TV and again refused to resign, stating 'I have never rejected a way to find a solution to this political crisis, but we should understand that a solution should not be based upon terrorism and continued use of violence.'[1]

On 28 April RTA and Red Shirts clashed in northern Bangkok leaving another soldier dead and wounding six protesters (some sources claim the latter figure was actually 18) when protesters attempted to advance on the security forces. The security forces then opened fire with tear gas and rubber bullets, pushing the protesters back after resorting to live ammunition and regained control of the area after several hours of fighting back and forth. The Red Shirts moved away from their Democracy Monument protest site and consolidated at Ratchaprasong in the centre of Bangkok, a mere kilometre from Lumphini Park where they entrenched for a long protest.

On 30 April around 200 protesters stormed Chulalongkorn Hospital again searching for soldiers they claimed were hiding there: after an hour of threatening staff and searching the hospital, the protesters left after finding no soldiers. The following day over 600 patients were evacuated from the hospital to sites around Bangkok and away from the escalating violence. Red Shirt leader Doctor Weng Tojirakarn apologised for the assault on the hospital calling it unjustified and unreasonable.

With the situation worsening, on 3 May PM Abhisit, after convening his Cabinet, called upon the Red Shirts to leave their camp in the centre of Bangkok and he would hold elections on 14 November: the Red Shirts agreed, but demanded that Deputy PM Suthep face criminal charges. The government responded that those responsible for unlawful killings of UDD/Red Shirt protesters would not be prosecuted. Nattawut Saikowar said 'we will end our demonstration and start negotiations the day that Suthep turns himself into the police.'[2] The government refused and withdrew their offer. The Red Shirts returned to their encampments and strengthened their barricades, refusing to leave. The government warned the protesters that they would be removed by force, and then cut off supplies of electricity and water to their camp.

Around 2,000 UDD Red Shirt protesters tried to take the protest to the suburbs but were thwarted by RTA soldiers who quickly contained them. A freeway in the suburbs became a battleground as skirmishes continued, leaving one soldier killed and dozens wounded as each side fired upon the other.

The main camp at Ratchaprasong was contained by the RTA with armoured vehicles blocking roads and waiting in side streets for the order to move in. Snipers were deployed on surrounding rooftops in case they were needed. Repeated calls for the Red Shirts to disband were ignored by the protesters as the security forces tightened their encirclement of the main camp. In what was to be dubbed 'savage May' (พฤษภาอำมหิต) the RTA and protesters clashed violently, resulting in two killed and dozens injured. Army Major General Khattiya Sawasdipol, the Red Shirts' military advisor and leader of the 'Ronin' – the Black Shirt security and general thugs – was shot in the head by a sniper's bullet as he was giving a press statement on the evening of 13 May, dying of his injury a few days later on the 17th. It still remains unclear if the Army or another faction fired the bullet, or if it was a stray (other gunshots were heard at the time). The RTA denied any involvement.

Around 3pm, French journalist Nelson Rand was gravely injured in the clashes by bullets from an assault rifle, with the death toll reaching five, with a further 46 injured in the continuing clashes. By 6pm the death toll had reached six, with over 100 injured in the escalating violence. Several grenade explosions were reported at the nearby shopping centre and at Sala Daeng BTS station. Canada, the UK and America closed their embassies amidst the worsening situation. By 8.30pm the death toll had reached 14, including an Italian journalist, and approximately 230 injured, and there were widely reported incidents of the RTP exchanging fire with the RTA; although these were unsubstantiated and may have been due to matter of perspective of the viewer, with the RTA or RTP appearing to be in the others' line of fire. The government expanded the state of emergency to 17 more provinces.

030
POLICE
THAILAND
31-8685

RTP prison/riot truck enroute to Bangkok, 2010. (Author's photograph)

Clashes continued into the next day, with the death toll reaching 25 killed and 175 injured, with Abhisit claiming the civilians killed had been shot by extremists who had infiltrated the protest camp, or by terrorists wearing Thai Army uniforms. In response the RTA established live fire zones near the protest site, shooting anyone who entered the zone, be they civilian, journalist or protester, and determined to end the protest 'by force if necessary.' The next day a gun battle at Lumphini Park claimed yet another 11 killed including two soldiers, but one of those deaths, a sergeant in the Royal Thai Airforce, was attributed to friendly fire.

The RTA, with some RTP support, made a determined push to clear the camp on 14 May, resulting in a huge skirmish leaving 10 killed and wounding 125 others, including several foreign correspondents. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called upon the protesters and PM Abhisit to reopen negotiations.

By 16 May, with the death toll at 35, it looked increasingly likely that Thailand would descend into civil war. A state of emergency was declared in five more provinces in the north-east of Thailand, preventing even more protesters joining those in the capital. The UDD stated they were ready for negotiations if the RTA pulled back, with the government responding that the protesters had to unconditionally disperse. The Thai senate called for an immediate ceasefire which the PM rejected, and so the fighting resumed.

RTA helicopters dropped leaflets on the protesters' camp on 17 May, urging them to leave, to allow the sick, elderly and the very young to leave the camps, and that they were to surrender by 3.00pm. The Red Shirts responded by firing rockets at the helicopters, which had to abort their mission. Deadly clashes continued with the RTA firing live rounds at anyone approaching the barricades, killing at least two protesters and wounding others. The Red Shirts responded by firing fireworks at the government forces and tried to shield the camp from view by burning tires. The casualty figures stood at 35 killed and around 265 wounded.

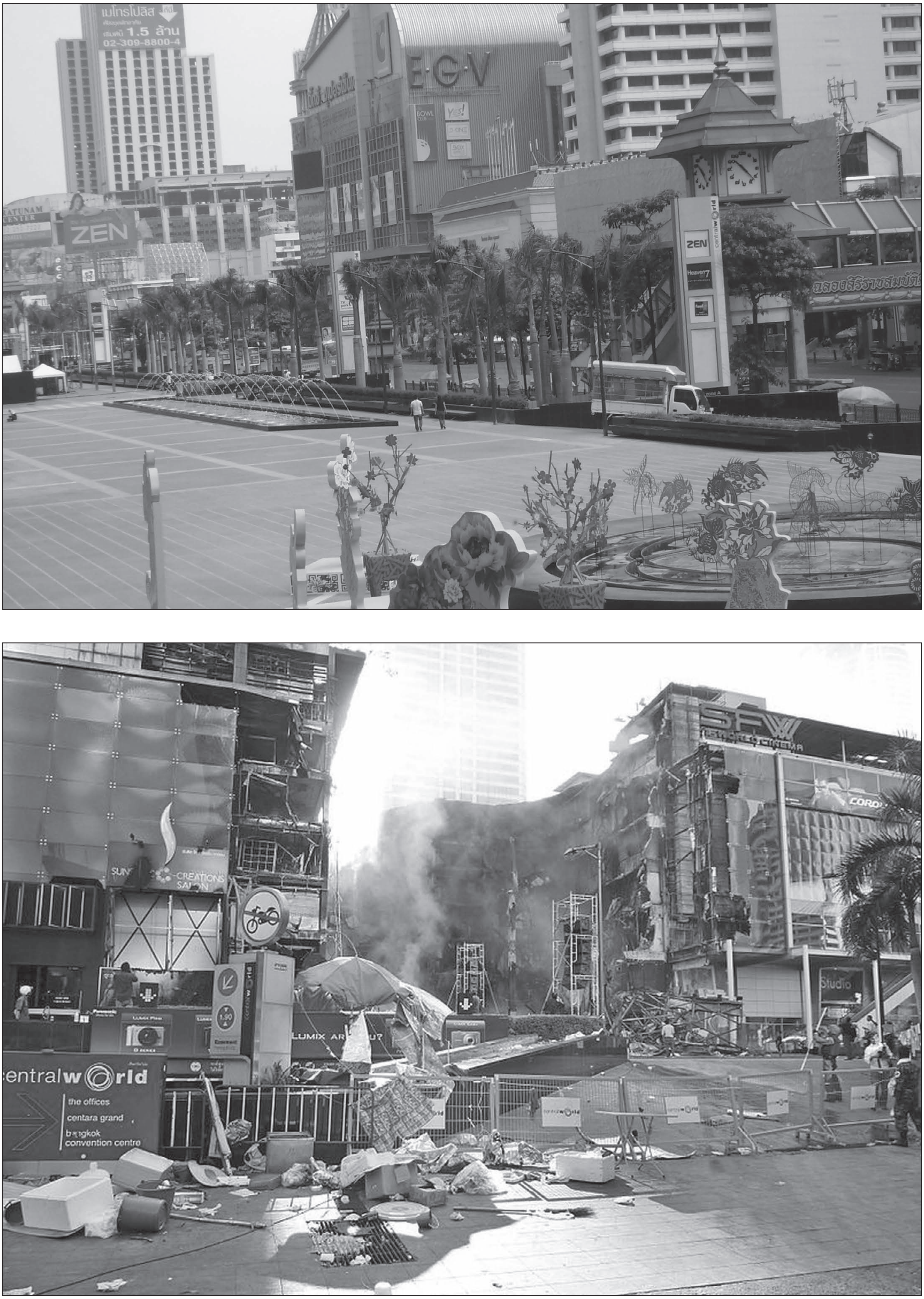
Clashes continued during 18 May, though not as intensely as on previous days. Clashes erupted sporadically throughout the day resulting in two protesters being shot and wounded as the RTA manoeuvred into position and made use of armoured personnel carriers. The Red Shirts set fire to the barricades to obscure the camp and to deter the RTA from assaulting. By the end of the day the death toll stood at 39 killed, the number of wounded is unknown.

With the situation worsening, the government ordered the RTA to clear the camps, which they did on 19 May 2010, backed up by Chinese-made Type-85 armoured personnel carriers and 300 infantry. The RTA moved against the Ratchaprasong Red Shirt camp on Rama IV Road, tearing through their barricades, with the following soldiers opening fire with live ammunition, tear gas and rubber bullets, resulting in the death of 11 protesters. An Italian journalist was wounded, along with two soldiers, in a grenade attack. It was reported in the media that the RTA fired upon medical staff going to the aid of the shot and wounded, though it may have been that the medics were simply in the line of fire. Vicious fighting ensued and by 1.30pm the majority of UDD leaders had surrendered to the RTP and called for the remainder of the protesters to surrender, which most did. Some hard liners broke out of the encirclement in the chaos and set fire to 27 buildings across Bangkok, including the popular Central World shopping centre, with fire gutting the building and causing massive amounts of damage. The Thai Stock Exchange, a cinema and several other buildings were also gutted by fire.

Casualties now stood at 80–90 killed and around 1,400 injured. PM Abhisit went on TV and stated that normalcy had been restored in the capital, but 'we recognise that as we move ahead there are huge challenges ahead of us, particularly overcoming the divisions that have occurred in this country.'[3] Two Red Shirts were later charged with the arson at Central World but were acquitted due to 'lack of material witnesses.' Several clashes with the authorities persisted after the crackdown on the Ratchaprasong camp, with skirmishes in Udon Thani, which were soon contained and ended after the Red Shirt leadership called for calm throughout Thailand.

BNH
HOSPITAL
SINCE 1898
www.BNHhospital.com

RTA troops advance on the protester camps behind their Chinese Type-85 APC. (Author's collection)

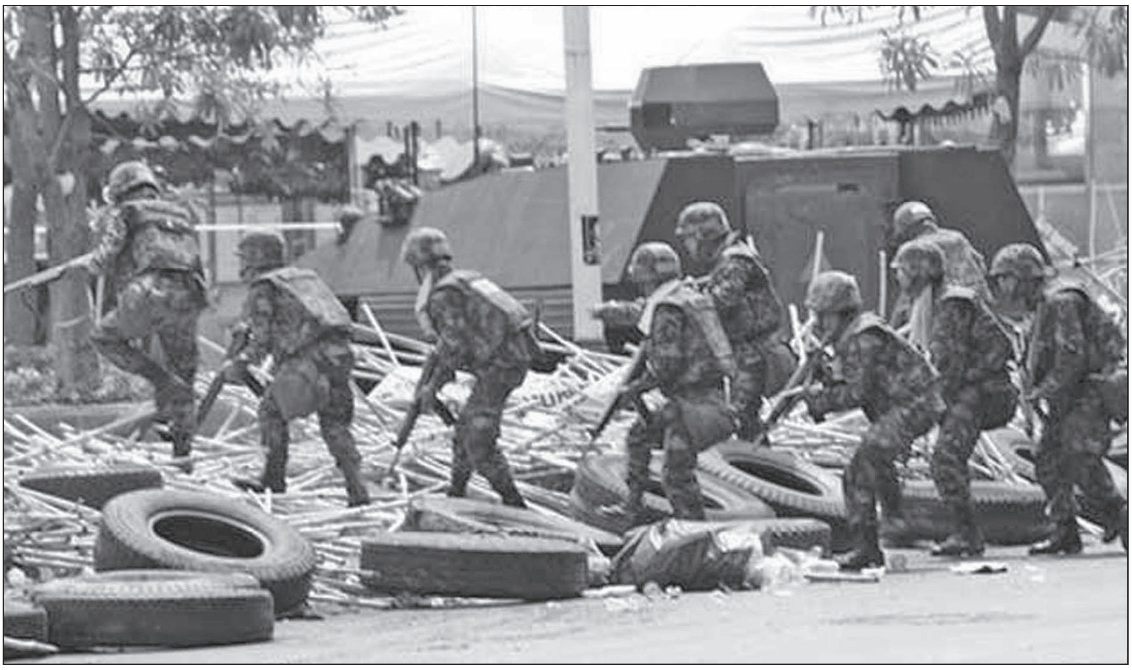

EGV
ZEN
centralwOrld
the offices
centara grand
bangkok
convention centre
SFW
LUMIX

The Central World shopping centre before and after the fire that gutted the building. (Author's photos)

Smoke rises over Bangkok as the protesters break out and set numerous fires. (Bangkok Post, used with permission)

RTA pushing the Red Shirt protesters in continuing skirmishes. (Khasod English, author’s collection)

The main tactic of the RTA in attacking the protester camps was to dismantle a gap in the barricades, either via the use of an APC, or by manually removing the barricade, those doing so protected by their comrades with riot shields. Once a gap was made, under the cover of tear gas grenades and rubber bullets, the RTA would enter and establish a line with interlocking shields and advance under cover of more tear gas and rubber bullets. If riot shields were not employed then the same tactic would be used, with batons, rifles and shotguns providing the covering fire necessary to establish a line, which then would advance into the protesters. Snipers were told to only engage threats to life and live ammunition was only to be used to protect life, with numerous reports however that the RTA and RTP fired indiscriminately at protesters, civilians, and others, claims that are hotly denied by both the RTA and the RTP. The intention was to break the protesting groups up into smaller groups, with each smaller group then being tackled individually. In reality, once inside the camps, the protesters would fire back with homemade weapons, sling shots, bricks, petrol bombs and even attack the advancing government forces with bamboo spears and homemade shields. Fighting constantly in the heat, having rocks and lumps of concrete thrown at them, petrol bombs and other homemade explosives, gradually wore down both the morale and physical strength of the soldiers and police, leading to degradation of performance, and if no fresh troops were available to enable the attackers to rotate out, they would have no choice but to retire, either behind their vehicles to establish a new limit to the camp and allow the protesters to rebuild barricades further away, or to exit the area entirely. Often the goal was to push the borders of the camps inwards, denying the protesters control of the ground, and to open up intersections and the streets.



(Above) RTA troops storm through Red Shirt barricades behind their Chinese Type-85 APC. (KhasodEnglish)

(Right) RTA Public Security Support Team ‘bunker’; these appeared all over Bangkok in the weeks leading up to the 2014 coup. (Author’s photo)

RTA's Public Security Support Team

อุทยานแห่งชาติน้ำตกทรายขาว
NAM TOK SAI KHAO NATIONAL PARK
ัดช้างให้
AT CHANG HAI
ที่จอดรถโดยสาร
ปัตตานี-นาประดู่
ปัตตานี-โคกโพธิ์
มีมอเตอร์ไซค์รับจ้าง
คิว...ถนนสุวรรณมงคล
สภ.เมืองปัตตานี
ขอบคุณที่ใช้บริการ
หัวหน้าคิว...ลี โทร.089-4626616

An RTA soldier mans a barricade during one of the various declarations of martial law. (Author's photograph)

2011 to 2013 Premiership of Yingluck Shinawatra

Protests continued in 2011 with the UDD and the PAD scheduling demonstrations mid-February. The Centre for Administration of Peace and Order first established in 2009 to combat the protests and maintain order, was resurrected to control the rallies planned between 9–23 February 2011. Protests continued from February through to July, but never involved violence and were relatively peaceful, unlike in previous years, and abated after the July 2011 election of Yingluck Shinawatra as Prime Minister of Thailand and the Phak Phea Thai party (พรรคเพื่อไทย) as the ruling party, garnering 265 seats out of 500 in the Thai House of Representatives. The PPT was a successor to Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Lak Thai party (พรรคไทยรักไทย) which had been banned in 2007 following the coup and the ousting of Thaksin that started the cycle of violence and protest.

Yingluck Shinawatra established her Cabinet on 9 August after her landslide victory on 27 July. Absent from her new Cabinet were any Red Shirt leaders or protesters who were involved in the years of violence. Yingluck set about stabilising the country and reviving the economy: raising the minimum wage, establishing a long-term plan to abolish poverty and various other measures only marred by her mismanagement of the damaging 2011 floods. These were caused by the highest levels of rain in 50 years and flooding started in the north but quickly spread to other provinces and by October the floods were the worst in Thai history. Yingluck established long-term flood defences, building drainage canals and flood barriers. Opposition leader Abhisit Vejjajiva called for Yingluck to declare a state of emergency, but

Yingluck Shinawatra, sister to deposed PM Thaksin Shinawatra. (Open source) she refused to do so, instead invoking the 2007 Disaster Prevention Mitigation Act giving the government greater authority to deal with flood damage.

On 18 January 2012 PM Yingluck reshuffled her Cabinet, assigning six of her Cabinet members to new posts and dismissing nine others, this regrouping was to establish loyalty to her as a reaction to the dissent following the 2011 flooding. Her premiership was marred by constant Cabinet reshuffles, with the fifth reshuffle appointing herself as defence minister in 2013 and eventually to her impeachment and subsequently being removed from office, leading to the 2014 coup.

2013 Protests and Shut Down Bangkok

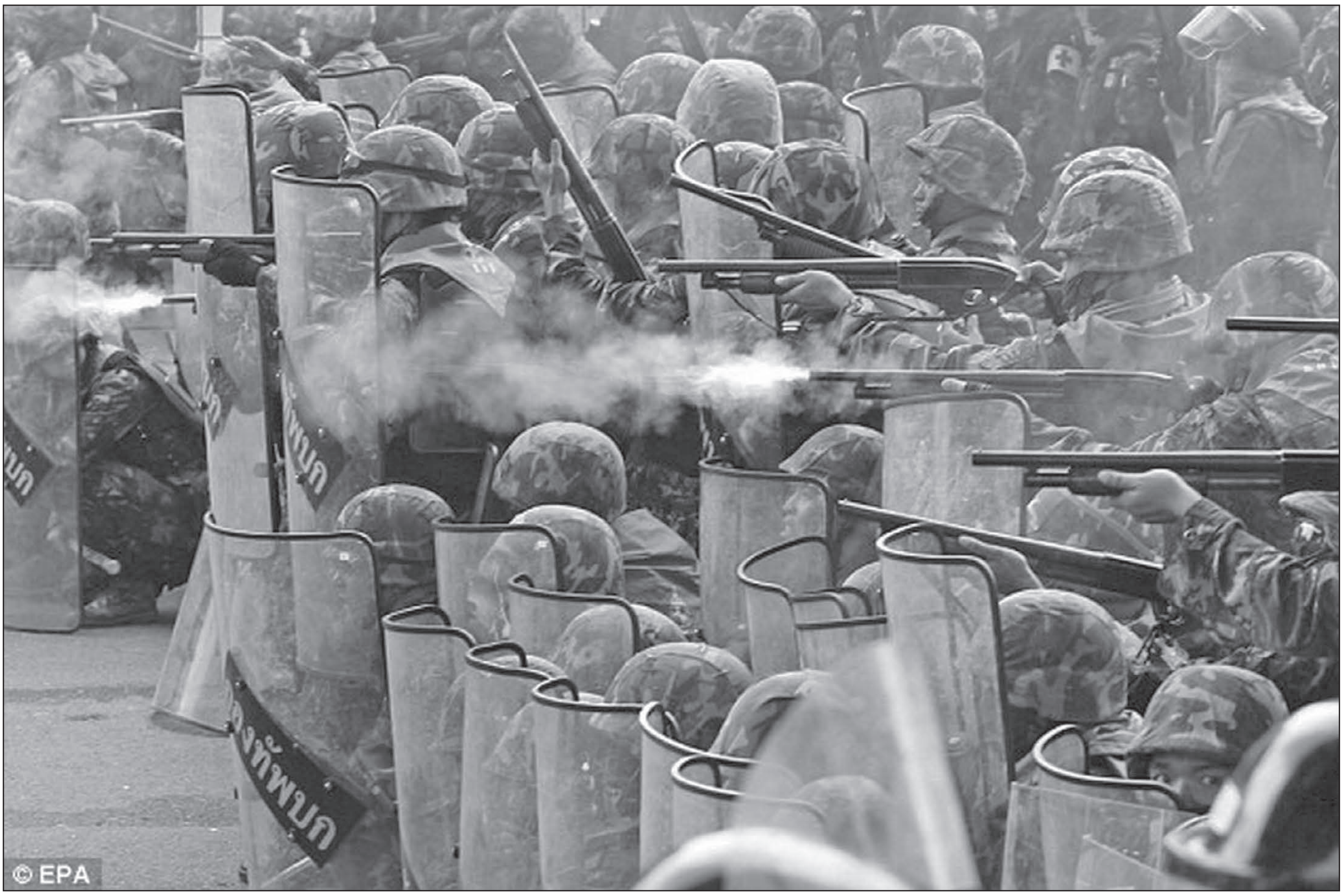
Protesting resumed in August 2013 by an anti-Thaksin group calling itself the Peoples' Democratic Force to Overthrow Thaksinism – it failed to garner any momentum; but was a reaction to several amnesty proposals from PM Yingluck. A revised amnesty bill was passed on 18 October 2013: in its original form the amnesty was only to include protesters and excluded government leaders and the military. In its revised form it was a blanket amnesty covering 2004–2013 and would allow the return of Thaksin Shinawatra as well as remove the murder charges levied against Deputy PM Suthep and PM Abhisit for their roles during the 2010 crackdown.

Protests started in earnest on 4 November 2013 in Bangkok and several provincial cities with the formation of the People's Democratic Reform Committee (คณะกรรมการประชาชนเพื่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงประเทศไทยให้เป็นประชาธิปไตยที่สมบูรณ์ อันมีพระมหากษัตริย์ทรงเป็นประมุข) established by former Deputy PM Suthep Thaugsuban with the primary aim of removing PM Yingluck from office, removal of the influence upon Thai politics of her brother in exile – Thaksin Shinawatra – creation of a people's council to oversee political reforms, and addressing the over-centralised bureaucratic system, class conflict and the urban-rural divide and disparity. Suthep stepped down as opposition leader and assumed the role of Secretary-General in the PDRC. At the same time, the pro-government Red Shirts also opposed the bill as it included murder charges relating to the 2010 crackdown.

Yingluck issued a statement urging the Thai senate to look at the proposed bill and think what would be best for the people of Thailand. The leaders of her party vowed not to revive the bill or any subsequent amnesty bills if it came to that. The Senate of Thailand voted on 11 November and out of hand rejected the amnesty bill.

Protests in Bangkok continued despite the amnesty bill being dropped. Suthep and eight Democrat members of Parliament resigned to lead the demonstrations, calling for strikes and for the people of Thailand to undertake protests, shifting the protests' aim towards an anti-government agenda, calling for the PM to resign and saying that the current PM was just a proxy for her exiled brother. Several groups were formed, including Suthep's PDRC, the Green Party, the Network of Students and People for the Reform of Thailand (NSPRT), and the Dharma Army – a Buddhist pressure group.

Suthep's PDRC marched on several government offices, occupying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Public Relations Office on 25 November 2013, forcing their closure. A state of emergency was declared in all of Bangkok's districts, Nonthaburi province, Bang Phli district in Samut Prakan



© EPA

RTA, wearing the colour of the day, blue, firing at protesters. (Author's collection) and Lat Lum Kaeo in Pathum Thani provinces. The protests passed peacefully with no violence.

On 27 November the PDRC blockaded the buildings of another 10 ministries cutting off the electric supply to the Department for Special Investigations HQ, forcing their evacuations. They also occupied the Chaeng Wattana government Complex and staged a sit-in protest there. Twenty-four provincial halls were also occupied across the south of Thailand by Suthep's PDRC, with Suthep stating 'Our aim is to topple the Thaksin regime and reform the country through the people!', and a Red Shirt leader identified as Goatee saying 'We demand the election system, Suthep is only the figurehead, I am fighting, behind the mob, that is the King! I am fighting him!'[4]

After the PM survived the no confidence vote on 28 November, NSPRT protesters seized the army headquarters in Bangkok demanding that the RTA join in the protests. Army Commander

RTA Rangers from north-east Thailand, line up ready to assault one of the protester camps in November 2013. (Author's collection)

ROYAL THAI POLICE
HEADQUARTERS

Metropolitan Police HQ, Bangkok. (Author's photo)

Prayut Chan O-Cha urged the various protest groups 'not to involve the military and to resolve the current crisis peacefully'. The government forces used water cannon, tear gas and batons to break up the protesters. On 30 November the offices of the Communications Authority of Thailand and Telephone Office of Thailand were briefly occupied by protesters disrupting internet services.

On the night of 1 December violence ensued at Ramkhamhaeng University as anti-government students and Red Shirts clashed near the stadium, a taxi containing Red Shirts was attacked and violence erupted. Several shots were fired at the students, leaving four dead and over 50 wounded in the clashes that lasted all night until the UDD dispersed their protest the following morning. Also on 1 December, Suthep's PDRC attempted to break into the Metropolitan Police HQ and Government House but were repulsed by the RTP using tear gas and water cannon. That afternoon the PM called in 2,500 unarmed RTA to assist the police manning barricades.

Protesters occupied several buildings including the Thai Public Broadcasting Service and forced the station to broadcast a public address by Suthep in a move condemned by three media organisations. In his televised address Suthep stated he had met with the PM and had delivered an ultimatum for her to resign within two days and that his PDRC had occupied 12 government buildings, a claim later denied by the National Security Chief Paradorn Pattanathabutr. PM Yingluck stated that suspending 'the democratic process would be unconstitutional' and rejected Suthep's calls for her resignation and the creation of a 'people's council' who would choose the leaders of Thailand. On 3 December RTP and the RTA dismantled barricades to allow people to celebrate the King's birthday.

Following the Kings birthday, Suthep called for protesters to 'take to the streets and march to Government House for a final battle.' It is widely reported that up to 160,000 protesters attended the rally on 9 December. All 153 Democrat MPs resigned in an attempt to put more pressure on Yingluck's government. In response the PM dissolved the House of Representatives and proposed an election to be held on 2 February 2014. Suthep demanded that she resign immediately, but Yingluck insisted on remaining as caretaker PM, stating that 'I have backed down to the point where I don't know how to back down any further!'[5]

On 22 December Suthep and the PDRC marched on the Thai-Japanese Sports Stadium, the venue for the registration process for the February elections, claiming 3.5 million protesters had joined them (with the real figure being placed around 270,000 protesters), and set up a semi-permanent protest there. On 26 December the protesters clashed with the RTP. Protesters wore gas masks and fired sling shots at the police who used baton rounds, tear gas and water cannon to try to end the fighting. One protester and one of the RTP were killed in the clashes that left 200 injured. The Election Committee of Thailand urged the government to postpone the elections due to the increase in violence but the government issued a statement via the Deputy PM that 'the election date is set in the royal decree dissolving Parliament' and rejected further requests to move the date.

The commander of the RTA, General Prayut Chan O-Cha, issued a statement on 27 December defending his decision not to involve the RTA and that they would 'use peaceful means, we do not wish to use force, and are in meetings to solve the issue.' However, he did not rule out the possibility of a coup, stating 'we do not wish to overstep the bounds of authority but will if the situation arises.' At the same time an arrest warrant was issued for Suthep, but the RTP did not act upon it for fear of inciting further violence and protest.

Shut Down Bangkok protest 2014

After the conclusion of the electoral registration process, in a speech on 27 December Suthep announced from his Victory Monument stage that his PDRC demonstrators were intending to 'Shut Down Bangkok! Restart the Government', starting on 13 January. He urged on the protesters, saying that the protest was going to take months and they would need to bring their clothes, and food, and for workers in Bangkok to clear their offices as victory could take months. He stated that it was his intention and the intention of the PDRC to occupy Bangkok, 'not leaving an inch' for the Thaksin regime to continue abusing the people, and that everyone needed to join in the fight to wipe out the Thaksin regime. He continued by saying that the PDRC had emptied its bank accounts before they were frozen by the Office of Special Investigations and the PDRC would offer compensation for anyone injured during the lengthy protest to come. Suthep also stated that the relatives of the police officer murdered in earlier clashes would be given one million Baht and this sum would also be given if there were other deaths incurred during the protest. Damage to motorcycles and other vehicles would also be compensated.

On 2 January, from his stage at Rajadamnoen boxing stadium, Suthep, set out the plan for shutting-down Bangkok, occupying major intersections, including those at Lumphini Park, Ashoke, Ladprao, Ratchaprasong and Pathum Wan, including some that had been occupied during the 2010 protests. All government buildings were to be disconnected from the electricity grid and from the water supply, and roads were to be blocked so no government vehicles could use them, and junctions occupied by the PDRC.

At a press conference on the same day, opposition protest leader Jatuporn Promphan announced that pro-government forces would 'fight under peaceful means' and would oppose those trying to shut down the government forcefully.

The head of the Centre for the Administration for Peace and Order (CMPO) on 4 January announced that any protesters attending Shut Down Bangkok events or counter-protesting would be in violation of the Thai criminal code and liable for arrest and prosecution. He announced that the government would enact a plan to cope with the shutdown, entitled the Capital Protection Plan, involving the RTP and other agencies in a simultaneous effort to combat the protests.

Suthep announced from his stage at Victory Monument that all of Yingluck's assets would be seized after they defeated the Thaksin regime. Suthep led thousands of protesters around northern Bangkok in a first of many 'pre shut down' rallies on 5 January, with two more scheduled for the 7th and 9th of the month. Protesters from opposing groups clashed in Chiang Mai in what would become a nationwide event.

PM Yingluck's Secretary-General Suranand Vejjajiva, stated on 6 January that the government was ready to enact emergency

Victory Monument protest site. (Author's collection)

decrees in the event of violent clashes and that the RTA was remaining neutral, a stance the government was respecting and would draw upon the RTP to deal with protest actions. PM Yingluck stated that enacting any emergency decree was a last resort and the Internal Security Act would be used to handle mass protest, she hoped things would be resolved peacefully and that elections were the only way, she remained at home with her family under heavy RTP guard.

On 6 January in Nakhorn Ratchasima a Red Shirt conference of over 5,000 coordinators was held under the umbrella of the United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) to discuss the crisis and their response to the PDRC's Occupy Bangkok operation and their response to it.

PM Yingluck on 9 January expressed concern that the protest would be hijacked by a 'third party, violence is sometimes the work of a third party which is a concern of mine' she stated and that the National Police Bureau would be monitoring the situation and the government would be ready to act.

A peaceful demonstration of candle lighting was held across the three universities of Srinakharinwirot, Silpakorn and Kasetsart, with citizens calling for peace, trust in the democratic process and for the government to discuss any compromises to avoid violence.

The Democratic Party headquarters was fired upon in a drive-by shooting at 2:30am on 13 January. The party had not yet joined the Shut Down Bangkok protest but it announced it would be boycotting the February elections. On the evening of 14 January, a grenade attack was carried out at the home of the Democratic Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva: an RTP EOD team discovered an American-made grenade that had been thrown onto the room where Abhisit's father slept. Three men and a woman were later arrested at a checkpoint on Sukhumvit road and the RTP recovered four more grenades, a gun and ammunition.

The National Anti-Corruption Commission started investigations into a surplus rice deal PM Yingluck had made with China, with allegations that she was criminally negligent in her handling of the deal. If she was to be found guilty, she would be impeached and forced to stand down.

Activities at the PDRC stage were temporarily halted when a grenade was thrown and shots fired on 17 January, with shots being fired at Chaeng Wattana Road, the Lumphini Park site, Lad Prao and Suan Pakkad palace. A grenade was also thrown at the home of the governor of Bangkok, but with no injuries. On the same day a procession being led by Suthep at the Charoenphol Lotus Shopping Centre resulted in the death of one protester and injuries to 38 others when a grenade was fired from a partially demolished building.

A security guard at the NSPRT protest camp on Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue was shot by an unknown gunman on 19 January and in the afternoon a bomb exploded injuring 28 people at the Victory Monument site. At the rally former Democrat MP Thawon Senneam stated that he believed the bomb was directed at him, with the attacker lobbing the device from behind a press tent. The Health Department stated that four people had been killed and 238 injured in the protests to date.

On the same day the National Human Rights Commission urged PM Yingluck to exercise caution when dealing with the protest leaders as any arrests or moves against them may inflame the situation. Niran Pitakwatchara explained that the government would be held accountable for any and all loss of life and that the government should de-escalate its stance on arresting protest leaders and look more to breaking any potential dead-ends by opening clear dialogue and compromise with the PDRC.

As of the 19th, the RTA remained neutral, a stance they continued, with the RTA's supreme commander General Thanasak

Patimaprakorn urging a peaceful outcome to the worsening situation and stating that 'if they [the protesters and government] don't talk, then we won't see any other way…'.[6]

On 20 January the Thai government was considering the activation of the emergency decree, but only if the protesters changed their tactics to close the banks and the government. However, with unrest increasing the law was invoked the following day with a 60-day state of emergency declared, giving the government the power to censor the media, break up gatherings of more than five persons, detain suspects without charge, enforce curfews, declare areas inaccessible and off limits, as well as giving the military the powers to enforce order with force if necessary. Protesters had triggered this government decision by targeting the financial infrastructure through blockading banks, financial institutions, and government offices.

In Udon Thani three grenade attacks were carried out, with one person killed and several more injured. Later, on 22 January, a pro-government figure, Kwanchai Paipana was shot; the investigating RTP concluded it was politically motivated and were looking for a bronze pick-up truck. Suthep confirmed that operation Shut Down Bangkok would proceed as planned.

The caretaker Minister for Labour, Chalerm Yubamrung – the chief of the Centre for the Administration for Peace and Order (CMPO) – announced on 26 January that an arrest warrant had been issued for Suthep and the RTP were going to process it; any loss of life resulting from Suthep's arrest should not be blamed on the RTP. He also announced that arrest warrants for 58 protest leaders had been issued and they could be detained for up to 30 days under the emergency decree before any further legal action was taken against them. Negotiations would continue with the PDRC to regain control of the occupied government offices and agencies. A protest leader by the name of Suthin Taratin was shot on top of a truck at one of the rallies outside of a polling station, dying later of the injuries sustained, three others were also injured in the gun attack. Akanat Promphan, Suthep's stepson and spokesperson for the PDRC, denounced PM Yingluck Shinawatra stating that as the head of the government she must take responsibility for the day's incidents, or the people would revolt.

The next day, 27 January, the caretaker Labour Minister Chalerm Yubamrung announced that protesters at the entrances to government buildings and/or occupying government offices had 72 hours to vacate those premises or face arrest.

Yingluck Shinawatra met with the Election Commission at the Army Club on 29 January, asking for a postponement of the February election. The EC ruled that the election would go ahead, and that they would organise the election to the best of their abilities, with a second round being staged for any voters that were hindered in partaking on 2 February. An additional 10,000 RTP personnel would be deployed to Bangkok on election day to prevent any violence. As the meeting progressed violence erupted

A Red Shirt protest convoy winding its way through Bangkok meets an RTA roadblock. (Bangkok Post, used with permission) outside between the PDRC protesters and government forces; one protester was shot in the abdomen, the protesters immediately attacked the gunman who turned out to be an undercover police officer who was acting in self-defence.

Suthep led a convoy of protesters through parts of Bangkok on 30 January in another bid, as part of his anti-election campaign, to encourage people not to vote in the upcoming election. The RTP in response announced that 190,000 RTP personnel would be deployed to the 10 southern provinces and Bangkok to prevent escalating violence during the election.

The RTA announced it would be supporting the CMPO during the election process and would prioritise guarding state officials, backing-up the RTP, providing medical aid at protests sites, and conduct traffic duties. The RTP stated that they had 200,000 police officers deployed alongside 1,450 rapid reaction officers and would be guarding 93,535 polling stations throughout Thailand.

On 31 January, Suthep stated that violence was not his intended aim and that polling stations would be allowed to open as normal, though any election results would be nullified afterwards because of various legal issues that would be revealed after the election. On the same day the vice-chairman for the UDD (Red Shirts), Supon Fumaljaroen, stated that pro-government supporters were willing to sacrifice their lives in support of Yingluck and that the city of Chiang Mai was ready for the capital to be relocated there, if she wished, should there be an anti-government coup, and that a separate state could be set up away from Bangkok. The General Secretary of Chiang Mai's UDD, Pichit Tamoon, went on to further state that the Red Shirts had the support of the Chiang Mai police force and that with 37 of the 77 provinces of the northeast backing the UDD, Yingluck would win the election. He further stated that the UDD did not need to stockpile weapons as they had the RTP on their side. In Thaksin's hometown in San Kamphaeng pro-government supporters told reporters that they were ready to lay down their lives in support of Yingluck, and that they were ready if she wished to relocate the capital to Chiang Mai.

Despite Suthep's reassurance that the PDRC would not interfere with the election process, and keep polling stations open, voting did not take place in 87 constituencies on 2 February – mostly in Bangkok – due to disruptions and protesters blockading the polling stations, with nearly 50 percent of those eligible being blocked from voting. Blockades across eight provinces – Trang, Krabi, Nakhorn Si Thammarat, Surat Thani, Patthalung, Chumpon, Songkhla and Phuket – caused a shortage of ballot papers and led to the EC cancelling the voting there, the requirement of the constitution that 475 seats of the 500 needed to be filled for the vote to be eligible was not reached. Compounded by the fact that ballot papers were stuck at post offices in various provinces such as Chumphon, Nakhorn Si Thammarat and Hat Yai, it was deemed by the Electoral Commission that by elections would last 'several months.' None of this eased the political situation.

On the evening of 1 February violence had broken out in the Lak Si district of Bangkok when PDRC demonstrators blockaded a truck delivering ballot papers from the Lak Si district office. Gunshots were exchanged, leaving six wounded. Violence continued, despite Suthep's assurances that the rallies, demonstrations and blockades were peaceful, protesters wearing the green armbands of the PDRC Guards clashed violently with government forces using assault rifles preventing people from voting, or the delivery of ballot papers or boxes.

Lad Prao and the Democracy Monument were reopened to traffic on 3 February and the PDRC moved their camps to Lumphini Park to strengthen their position around that area, including Ratchadamnoen Intersection.

The Thai Criminal Court approved arrest warrants for 19 protest leaders on 5 February 2014 for violations of the Emergency Decree in Bangkok, Samut Prakan, parts of Pathum Thani, and

A Giant Thai flag on a pendulum flying over the Lumphini Park protest site. (Author's photo)

Nonthaburi, allowing them to be detained for up to seven days. The CMPO at the same time dispatched a team to negotiate the re-opening of the Interior Ministry with threats to arrest the PDRC leaders if they had not vacated the Ministry building by 3.00pm of the same day.

On 6 February Suthep proposed a postponement to his indictment of premeditated murder charges, alongside former PM Abhisit, after they ordered the Centre for the Resolution of the Emergency Situation to act against UDD protesters in 2010 which had resulted in 90 deaths. The postponement was denied, and he would have to report by 13 February.

Chalerm Yubamrung, the chief of the CMPO, warned the protesters still occupying the Ministry of the Interior on 7 February that if they did not leave within four days – vacating the building by 11 February – 1,000 RTP and defence volunteers would force their eviction. Khomsan Thongsri, the PDRC leader at the Ministry, replied that he would allow workers to do their jobs, but the protesters would remain on the site. On the same day, the Thai Civil Court gave a 10 February deadline for statements to be handed in by Yingluck Shinawatra, Chalerm and police chief Adul Saengsingkaew for the case brought by Thaworn Senneam, the PDRC deputy leader, regarding the validity of the emergency decree. The Civil Court was confident they would have a ruling by 12 February. Lieutenant General Paradon Patanabutr, the secretary of the Security Council stated that they had 12 teams ready to enforce the arrest warrants for the 19 core PDRC leaders and confidently stated that the arrests would go ahead. At the same time the Thai Criminal Court rejected the DSI's submission for arrest warrants for a further 13 PDRC leaders, dismissed because the facts surrounding the PDRC protest had changed significantly.

Suthep stated on the evening of 13 February, in one of his many daily speeches, that he would not have a conversation with Yingluck even if a third – neutral – party was involved, as 'she has no ability to think for herself, I am not crazy enough to speak to a puppet with someone pulling the strings from behind.'

Operation Valentine was conducted on 14 February with the intention of clearing protesters from the main sites and to reclaim public spaces occupied by the Students and Peoples Network for Thailand's Reform. The RTP moved to the Misakawan Intersection where they removed tents from the Makkhawan Bridge and Ratchadamnoen road, with the protesters already having vacated the site before the RTP's arrival. The RTP also cleared the site at the intersection near Government House with no resistance. Chalerm stated that 'we urge protesters to go home, our country cannot function like this.' Protesters reoccupied the site outside Government House and over 1,000 protesters gathered outside the RTP's headquarters in Bangkok.

One hundred and forty protesters were arrested when nine companies of the RTP stormed the protest site at the Department of Energy on 18 February as they refused to leave and clashed with the police. Five more sites were also cleared by the RTP, but violence erupted as the RTP moved against the Phan Fah Bridge site, with protesters sitting in the road on Ratchadamnoen Avenue. Police removed tents, but the protesters grew violent when more joined the demonstration. The RTP fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse them but as they drew closer, they were fired upon with guns and petrol bombs, and in one instance a grenade, the RTP responded with live ammunition before retreating. In all, by 19 February there were five killed, including one police officer, and 64 wounded at the Phan Fah Bridge battle. The RTP stated that by 23 February 2014 all protest sites would be cleared.

Violence continued, with further death and injury on 22–23 February at two PDRC protest sites within Bangkok and at Trat, a town 300km south-east of the capital. A rally on the 23rd on Rachadamri Road outside a shopping mall ended with three killed after a 40mm grenade exploded, killing a woman and her two

RTP units moving against a protest site in Bangkok. (Bangkok Post, used with permission) children. A tuk-tuk driver was later arrested for their murder by the RTP. Grenades and gunfire killed one and injured 34 others in Trat on 22 February. PDRC protesters the following day blockaded the Customs department in Khlong Toey, the Voice TV Station, and various ministries.

On 28 February, Suthep announced the closure of the rally sites at Pathum Wan, Ratchaprasong, Silom and Asoke by the end of 2 March. In a rare instance he apologised to the people of Bangkok affected by the occupation. The PDRC relocated its main effort to the stage at Lumphini Park, with the only other stage at Cheng Wattana overseen by a senior monk who refused to relocate or dismantle the stage. Suthep further stated that from 3 March onwards the main effort would be to disrupt the Shinawatra family's businesses.

In Ayuttiah a new leader of the Red Shirts (UDD) was established at a rally of 10,000 supporters, with former MP Jatuporn Prompan replacing Tida Tawonrnseth. At his inauguration he stated that a big fight was coming and that the Suthep movement could never achieve success.

The Ombudsman's request of 6 March for the Constitutional Court to decide if the royal decree – whereby the House of Representatives was dissolved – was unconstitutional, was decided on 21 March. The Constitutional Court ruled that the decree was in contravention of the constitution as far as the 2 February election went as the election could not be completed on that day due to the blockades, therefore by dint the election was invalidated. The decision provoked a lot of debate on the fine wording of the constitution within the academic law circles of Thammasat and Chulalongkorn universities, especially as the law would be unconstitutional because it was contrary to the constitution, not because it was prevented from being implemented. There were calls that the decision was a constitutional coup with the absolute aim of removing the Cabinet of Yingluck, creating a power vacuum with the intention of nominating their own PM. The Pheu Thai Party stated that the country had missed an opportunity to move forwards and the court had therefore established a precedent that an entire election could be overturned because a polling station was disrupted. Opposition MP Chuwit Kamolvisit stated that 'the court has set a standard that if you wish to overturn an election just find someone to block a few polling stations, making the election void'.

On 21 March, students at the Democracy Monument started a protest with the slogan 'Respect My Future', covering the monument in a black cloth to 'mourn the passing of democracy'. At the same time, another group with the slogan 'Respect My Vote' started a protest outside Lord Rattanathibet's mansion, the former seat of the Thai Constitutional Court. Other protests involving black candles and balloons were conducted throughout parks in Bangkok. Pheu Thai Party members stated they would wear black for six days: one day for each judge of the Constitutional Court. PDRC speaker Ekkanut applauded the decision and berated Yingluck's government for not finishing the election process and that this was an opportunity to reform elections. Anti-government protesters stated they would continue disrupting elections until an unelected people's council was achieved.

Back on 30 September 2011, the PM's office had transferred Police General Priewpan Damapong – elder brother of Thaksin's former wife Potjama Shinawatra – to the post of RTP Commissioner General, replacing Police General Wichian Photphosri. Wichian Photphosri was appointed as the Secretary-General of the National Security Council, replacing Thawin Pliansri, who was transferred to the position of advisor to the PM. A case was brought against Yingluck Shinawatra that she had not acted in the interest of the nation but was intending to favour her family. The Supreme Administrative Court delivered its judgement on 7 March 2014 stating that the transfer had been legal but was not reasonable as Thawin did not discharge his duties effectively. The court ordered Yingluck to transfer him back to his previous post within 45 days.

Thai girl singing from the back of a sound truck at a UDD protest site. (Channel 5)

The Supreme Court of Thailand in March 2014, seen from across Sanam Luang park. Note the barricades erected to stop protesters reoccupying the site. (Author's photo)

The office of the PM announced they had transferred him on 28 April, retrospective to 30 September 2011. A further motion was made to remove Yingluck from office as she had acted in the interests of her family by interfering with appointments and promotions.

Violence committed by the PDRC and their supporters continued with police in Surat Thani arresting a gunman who was paid by the PDRC to shoot at Red Shirts at Lak Si the day before the election, where he injured eight, including one person paralysed. At the time of his arrest the gunman still had the M16 rifle supplied by the PDRC. Issara Somchai – the former Democratic MP from Ubon Ratchathani and one of the PDRC's leaders – had an arrest warrant issued for him along with five others; accused of beating, torturing, and kidnapping a civilian found with Red Shirt supporter cards on his person; he was beaten for five days before being thrown in the Bang Pakong River.

On 24 March 2014 members of the Peoples Radio for Democracy Group – another faction of the UDD (Red Shirts) – rallied outside the anti-corruption offices. In the demonstration four members attacked a Buddhist monk, Phra Prat, who had gone to the aid of another man, he then complained to the protesters who attacked him stating he was not a real monk.

On 29 March Suthep led a group of anti-government demonstrators around Bangkok from Lumphini Park – their main protest site and stage – to the Royal Plaza and the Parliament building, eventually returning to Lumphini Park where Suthep reiterated his calls for the government to dissolve.

On 3 April the Constitutional Court of Thailand ordered Yingluck to respond within 15 days, which she did, stating that she had no hand in the appointment of candidates to the post of RTP Commissioner General, neither did she make the appointment to favour her family. Furthermore, she could not be further removed from office as she was technically no longer in office after the dissolution of the House of Representatives, but could remain, as per the constitution, until a new house was formed.

On 5 April Suthep outlined his goals in the campaign to remove Yingluck completely from her post as caretaker, calling on local PDRC networks to gather up lists of their members and stand by for a 'prolonged fight' that would, in his words, 'last for 15 days.' His strategy rested on two possible outcomes of the ruling by the Constitutional Court on if Yingluck had violated the 2007 constitution. If the court ruled in favour of Yingluck, then the PDRC would mobilise, with Suthep assuming the role of sovereign body in charge to enact a new charter and constitution. He stated he would freeze Yingluck's assets and that although he could order anyone executed by firing squad he would refrain and appoint a PM and Cabinet members who would then go forward with appointing a National Legislative Assembly and a Peoples' Council who could then start the job as unelected legislative bodies in reforming the nation. Suthep assured his followers that power would be returned to the Thai people after the reforms.

On 25 April a soldier who was removing a barricade at the Chaeng Wattana site was fired upon by the protesters' guards who only stopped when he showed his government ID card.

On 7 May 2014 the Constitutional Court gave its verdict stating that Yingluck had promoted the interests of her family over those of the nation in the moving of Thawin to the post of Commissioner General of the RTP, and unanimously decided to remove her from office along with nine other ministers, including Chalerm Yubamrung; the Minister of Labour and head of the CMPO. The court appointed Deputy Prime Minister Niwatthamrong Boonsongpaisan as caretaker Prime Minister. His first job was creating the Centre for Administration of Peace and Order (CAPO); a Royal Thai Police body tasked with bringing the deadlock between the protesters to an end. Tight security surrounded the court as the announcement was made, with the court coming under fire for overturning their own precedent, as on 5 February they had dismissed a similar petition against Abhisit Vejjajiva stating that he had already left the office therefore could not be removed any further. Yingluck Shinawatra immediately held a press conference upon hearing the verdict, with Red Shirt leaders stating the decision was a judicial coup, and announced plans to hold a rally on 10 May. The court responded by going on holiday until 13 May.

On 9 May Suthep launched his 'final battle', with his supporters marching on the stations Thai TV Channels 3, 5, 7, 9 and NBT, occupying them, and making sure they played PDRC-approved content. Suthep stated that as the stations were mouthpieces for the government, he could no longer allow them to broadcast pro-government propaganda and asked that the stations cooperate and broadcast his speech once he had achieved victory.

The faction led by Luang Phu Buddha Issara went to the CMPO headquarters where violence immediately erupted between them and the RTP. They dismantled barricades, demanding a representative come out and speak with them within five minutes. After the time had elapsed, they broke into the building and had a violent battle with the RTP who fired rubber bullets and tear gas and used water cannon. The protesters withdrew with four wounded, including Issara himself.

On 10 May the PDRC and Suthep were allowed access to the Santi Maitree building within the Government House complex, the same building that housed the Cabinet ministers' offices, which from then onwards the PDRC would use as a meeting place. The next day, 11 May, the PDRC dismantled their stage at Lumphini, and the associated camp, and relocated to Ratchadamnoen Avenue, not far from Government House.

The Red Shirts staged a rally in support of Yingluck on Aksa Road, where she pleaded with the president of the Supreme Court of Thailand to reconsider the demands of Suthep, to appoint a new PM on the basis of Suthep's not yet nominated senate speaker, and that any demands made by Suthep should be carefully considered by the Supreme Court as any attempts to discuss unlawful demands, or take those demands seriously, would steer Thailand towards civil war.

Declaration of Martial Law

Due to the escalating violence, and following the death of three protesters and the wounding of 23 others after a gunman opened

บริษัท เพาเวอร์วัน ทรานสปอร์ต จำกัด
POWERONE TRANSPORT CO.,LTD.
โทร. 02-976-7018 087-680-1393
วก 8130

During the continuing standoff between the Red Shirts and the government, the RTP relied on provincial police stations to provide extra manpower. Here an RTP bus returns from the capital. (Author's photo)

A provincial RTP car outside a Bangkok hotel during the surge of policing at the height of the protests in May 2014. (Author's photograph)

fire on one of the camps, the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, General Prayuth Chan O-Cha, declared martial law on 20 May, effective from 3am, under Rama VI's Martial Law BE2457 (1914) Act. General Prayuth stated in his televised address afterwards that martial law had been enacted to restore and maintain peace due to the continued and escalating violence from various parties, allowing the military to effectively police the situation. General Prayuth then went on to explain that he had dissolved the RTA's Centre for Administration of Peace and Order; establishing his own Peace and Order Maintaining Command (POMC) of the RTA with the intention of 'restoring peace to the people (of Thailand) without delay from all sides of the conflict'. General Prayuth asked for the cooperation of the Royal Thai Police, Royal Thai Airforce and the Navy in respecting the imposed curfew and martial law and be subjected to the laws of the POMC, and that the RTA was not staging a coup, stating 'this move is not a coup, the government remains firmly in control' and that the POMC would have the power to 'prevent, supress, abate and resolve' the situation 'to restore peace and order to the people without delay'. The POMC would have the power to enforce martial law, enforce national security and to summon whomsoever they wished.[7] The caretaker government of Niwatthamrong stated later that the RTA had never sought his opinion on the martial law declaration or approval thereof.

General Prayuth Chan O-Cha giving a speech on Channel 5 News, May 2014. (Channel 5 News)

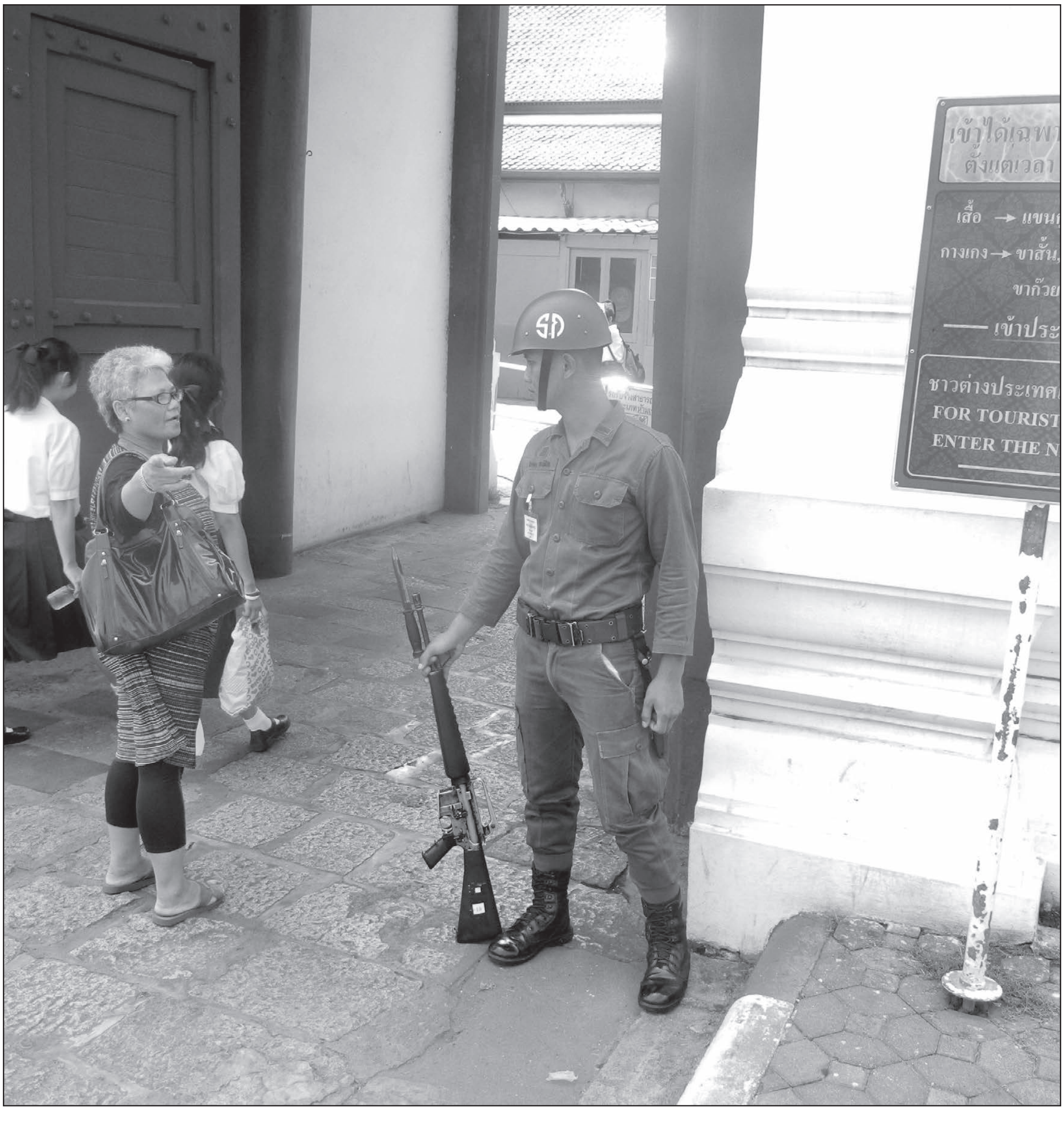
Royal Thai Army soldiers were dispatched to various intersections, train stations, shopping centres, parks, and government buildings to help 'maintain peace and order' a measure that worked, with no protests being held and the majority of protesters leaving Bangkok and returning home within the first week, the remainder over the next few months. Soldiers maintaining checkpoints and highly visible sentry duties effectively dialled down the protesting sides and accomplished what the RTP had failed to do – mainly due to overstretched manpower – whereas the army had a number of divisions at its disposal.

The Royal Thai Army retook Government House from the protesters and seized all radio and television stations and closed the PDRC and Red Shirt channels. Channel 5, a military-owned channel, was the only one to continue to broadcast. General Prayuth ordered all TV stations to replace their regular programming with POMC programmes whenever it was deemed necessary. The POMC shut down the newspapers and internet service, though service was restored a day later with the establishment of the Internet Task Force, with all newspapers and media having to go through the POMC to have their content approved, with a permanent ban on publishing anything that would be detrimental to the RTA's mission. The POMC also requested that all government agency chiefs report to General Prayuth directly.

The POMC established talks with the caretaker government and Yingluck Schinawatra and the UDD, and Suthep Thaugsuban of the PDRC, to find a resolution that would work for everyone and end the countless protests and support groups. The talks passed backwards and forwards with no side prepared to concede. When the Election Commission requested that the government resign, caretaker PM Niwatthamrong denied the request stating that according to the 2007 Constitution the government would resign en masse after the dissolution of the House of Representatives but remained in power until such a time as a new Cabinet was formed.

2014 Coup D'état

The POMC held a second round of talks on 22 May at the Army Club in Bangkok with all participants present. During these talks, mention was made of the Pink Shirts and the pro-government Blue Shirts, General Prayuth looked up and said 'all this talk of coloured shirts? What next? Rainbow shirts?' The debate over the resignation of the government then continued for five hours with no agreement or any concessions reached, General Prayuth slammed his papers down and asked the Minister of Justice, Chaikasem Nitisiri, 'this talk knows no end because all you speak about is the law, the government insists it will not resign, right?' The Minister of Justice replied 'no, not at this moment,' General



Soldier of the King's Guard Division outside the Royal Palace and Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Note the older style helmet with Royal Guard cypher and M16A1 with bayonet fitted, but no magazine. (Author's photo)

An RTA pick-up truck passes the Temple of the Golden Buddha, a royal site beside the Chao Phaya, near Sanam Luang, 2014. (Author's photograph)

Prayuth then leaned on the table and stated, 'then sorry, regrettably I must seize power,' detaining everyone attending the talks: the caretaker government, Suthep, Yingluck, Red Shirt and PDRC leaders and other political parties, removing them to the HQ of the 1st Infantry Regiment, King's Guard, in Phaya Thai District.[8]

On the night of 22 May General Prayuth announced on television that the RTA had seized power in a coup d'état and was taking total control of Thailand. He ordered the dissolution of the caretaker government, the Cabinet and also repealed the 2007 constitution, apart from chapter 2 that dealt with the King, leaving the senate, the courts and other state organs intact. He stated that all protesters should abandon their camps and return home or face imprisonment. Public gatherings of five or more people were banned and a curfew was in effect nationwide from 10.00pm through to 05.00am, later changed to midnight until 4am. General Prayuth announced that he had formed the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) and that would in effect run the country:

Table 6: Structure of the National Council for Peace and Order

Leader of the NCPO	General Prayuth Chan O-Cha
Deputy Leaders NCPO	General Thanasak Patimaprakorn (Chief of Defence Forces)
	Admiral Narong Pipathanasai (Royal Thai Navy Commander-in-Chief)
	Air Chief Marshall Prajin Juntong (Royal Thai Air Force Commander)
	Police General Watcharapol Prasarnrajkit
Secretary-General NCPO	General Udomdet Sitabut (RTA Deputy Commander)

The leader of the NCPO was to have all the powers of a Prime Minister, and the NCPO deputies the power of a PM's Cabinet until such a time as a new PM and Cabinet could be formed. The NCPO dissolved the existing senate and granted legislative powers to its leader and ordered Thailand's judicial branch to operate under its directives. The NCPO banned gatherings of five or more people, declared a nationwide curfew and cracked down on the internet and media.

Phra Buddha Issara, the PDRC coleader announced to his followers that the coup was a victory for the anti-Shinawatra protesters and urged his followers to disperse and go home. The RTA moved into the protests sites and fired in the air to disperse the protesters. The last group left Bangkok on 23 May with the RTA providing 70 military vehicles to carry them home.

On 26 May 2014, King Bhumiphol Adulyadej (Rama IX) endorsed the coup officially despite already acknowledging it on 24 May. In Thailand the monarchy is highly respected, and a royal endorsement was legitimisation of the coup and General Prayuth. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX, invited General Prayuth to the palace where he appointed him to 'take charge of public administration.'[9]

On 30 May General Prayuth gave the first of his Friday night speeches, simultaneously on all national TV channels, and subtitled in English. The NCPO stated that it aimed to conduct economic, social and political reforms before any elections could be called and that a national reform council had been set up to work on those reforms. The rice pledge project – a deal for surplus rice PM Yingluck had made with China, with allegations that she was criminally negligent in her handling of the this – would be handled by the NCPO, and the Bangkok anti-flood project started in 2012 would also be finished. Elections would be held within the next 15 months and in July the new Interim Constitution of Thailand would be enacted, paving the way for the establishment of a national legislature, reformation council and a provisional government.[10]

Immediately following the coup several major leaders of the government and its opposition were detained by the NCPO and questioned in a better effort to get the deadlock between opposition parties broken with the ideal of coming to a peaceful solution to the political unrest that had plagued Thailand for the last decade and reaching a solution that would be agreeable to both sides. The NCPO detained Chalerm and his sons as well as several other ministers including Yingluck, who was released on 25 May. The NCPO summoned in total 114 prominent figures from both sides and stated that any who refused would be arrested by the RTA and prosecuted. The first to refuse was prominent activist Sombat Boonngamanong 'Dotty Editor' who posted on his Facebook page 'catch me if you can'; on 5 June he was tracked down to a house in Chon Buri and received two years in prison for failing to surrender when asked, and a further seven years for encouraging others to fail to appear when summoned.

Unlike previous coups there was no immediate agenda for the transition of military power to that of the civilian body, partly due to the fact that the main parties could not resolve their major differences, and in order to avoid more protests, more loss of revenue, and more loss of life. General Prayuth had also stated at the beginning when he announced the coup that the right conditions would need to be in place for there to be an election, and reforms would need to take place before that could happen. He pledged that he would conduct a thorough economic, social, and political reform before any elections would be held, and also said that he wished to handle several other projects such as the high-speed train link from Bangkok to northern Thailand, and the aforementioned government rice pledge project and the flood defence system initiated by Yingluck's government.

The NCPO announced it would be using the existing military command and control structure to effectively run the country and that General Prayuth would remain the leader administering the country until the time was right for elections. In the meantime, the military would develop the country, and the issues leading to the continued protests would be addressed.

On 26 May at a press conference General Prayuth told the assembled journalists that 'it is already in the plan' for him to take over as prime minister, but he said that an election 'depended on the situation, there is no deadline.'[11] A few days later, on 30 May, he stated that elections would not be held for at least 15 months and asked that everyone cooperate and stop protesting.

Despite being asked not to protest, several demonstrations by various anti-coup protesters were thwarted by the RTA. The largest of these consisted of 1,000 protesters gathered in front of the Victory Monument, but the RTA stopped them, making use of a police truck; some of the protesters were apprehended and later released.

Coup protesters started using the three-finger salute from *The Hunger Games* book and film franchise, with the fingers representing liberty, equality and brotherhood, borrowed from the cry of '*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*' dating back to the French Revolution. The NCPO announced that anyone using such a salute would be arrested. It was later prominently used during the 2020 pro-democracy protests. After the banning of the three-finger salute, protesters adopted the sandwich as an anti-coup symbol, handing out sandwiches in public with the motto 'sandwiches for democracy.'

General Prayuth Chan O-Cha was formerly sworn in as Prime Minister of Thailand by the National Legislature in August 2014. On 29 September 2014, General Payuth formally retired from his position as head of the armed forces of Thailand, taking up his new position as interim caretaker prime minister. General Udomdej Sitabutr replaced him as head of the RTA. PM Prayuth was elected to the position of PM in the 2019 Thai election, but still retained the position of chief of the armed forces.

CHAPTER 5

WHO'S WHO: BIOGRAPHIES OF PERSONALITIES OF NOTE

Prayuth Chan O-Cha (ประยุทธ์ จันทร์โอชา)

Born on 21 March 1954 in Nakhorn Ratchasima to Colonel Prapat Chan O-Cha and Khemphet Chan O-Cha, a schoolteacher, he was the eldest of four siblings. He is married to Naraporn, a former associate professor at Chulalongkorn University's Language Institute, currently president of the RTA's Wives Association and teacher of English through a distance learning programme. They have twin daughters, Nittha and Thanya who had some success with a punk-lite pop duo called BADZ.

Prayuth spent his last year of High School at the Armed Forces Academy's Preparatory School (AFAPS) and attended the Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy. In addition to completing his Infantry Officers Courses whilst at the academy he graduated with a BSc. After further training including Command and General Staff College he began his career with the rank of major and became a royal guard under Prem Tinsulanoda's prime ministership in 1987. Three years later he served in the 21st Infantry Regiment, Queen Sirikit's Guards. In 2001 he was elevated to Deputy Commanding General in the 2nd Infantry Division, becoming its commanding officer in 2002. In 2005 he was promoted to deputy commander, 1st Army, which included the 2nd Infantry Division.

After the 2006 coup Prayuth became the chief of staff of the RTA, from 2008 to 2009 and appointed honorary adjutant to His Majesty the King. In 2010 he succeeded General Anupong Paochinda as the Commander-in-Chief of the RTA and during the 2010 protests was part of the Centre for the Resolution of the Emergency Situation (CRES) under PM Abhisit Vejjajiva and Deputy PM Suthep Thaugsuban. In May 2014 he tried to bring the rival factions of Yingluk and Suthep to a resolution that culminated in the army taking power in that year's coup and establishing the National Council for Peace and Order with himself as the leader, being appointed as Prime Minister in August of the same year, and then elected as PM in the 2019 elections.

The 2017 constitution set a term limit of eight years for prime ministers, which, if counted from 2014 would have meant his premiership ended in August 2022. Legal challenges were brought about resulting in PM Prayuth being suspended and his deputy, Prawit Wongsuwan taking the reins of power until the Constitutional Court ruled on 30 September 2022 that the eight-year period started when the constitution took effect, and thus his eight-year tenure would end in 2025 if he was re-elected in the elections scheduled for 2023.

Yingluck Schinawatra (งลักษณ์ ชินวัตร)

Yingluck Schinawatra was born on 21 June, 1967 to Loet Schinawatra and Yindi Ramingwong. Her father was a businessman and an MP for Chiang Mai, with his family originating from Guandong in China and emigrating to Thailand in the 1860s. Her mother's side is descended from Princess Chantip na Chaingmai, former Chiang Mai royalty. Yingluck is the youngest of nine children and grew up in Chiang Mai, she attended a private girls' school there until college where she graduated with a BA in Political Science and Public Administration, receiving an MPA Degree in Management Information Systems from Kentucky State University in 1991. Her siblings include brother Thaksin Schinawatra, in whose business she became an executive after graduating, later moving on to be president of property developer SC Assets. Thaksin Schinawatra was Prime Minister from 2001 until 2006, when he was deposed by a coup. Yingluck is a politician in the Pheu Thai Party and was elected as Thailand's first female Prime Minister following the 2011 elections, campaigning on a platform of poverty eradication and income tax reduction, winning by a landslide. After mass protest in 2013 she dissolved Parliament and triggered a snap election, continuing to act as the caretaker PM until removed from office by the Constitutional Court. She was arrested after the 2014 coup but later released.

She was tried in 2016 for her rice-pledging scheme corruption, a case citing millions of Thai farmers who still remain unpaid. She did not appear for the verdict announced in 2017 and an arrest warrant was issued. She fled abroad and is rumoured to be living in London. Yingluck has Serbian nationality and since 2018 is the chairwoman of Shantou International Container Terminals a Chinese port operator in Guandong province.

Chalerm Yubamrung (เฉลิม อยู่บำรุง)

Born on 10 June 1947, Chalerm Yubamrung is married to Lamnao Yubamrung, an auxiliary judge in The Juvenile Court of Thailand; they have three sons. Chalerm graduated the RTP Academy and reached the rank of police captain before resigning his commission to focus on politics, achieving a doctorate in law from Ramkhamhaeng University in the process. Chalerm won several MP positions with his Mass Party, with his powerbase being western Bangkok, allying his party with Thai Nation Party and eventually with the Thai Rak Thai Party under Thaksin Shinawatra. In the 2007 election Chalerm joined the Peoples Power Party and was elected MP, joining Samak's Cabinet as the Minister of Interior, serving Somchai Wongsawat's government as Minister of Public Health. From 2009 to 2011 he was the floor leader of the Pheu Thai Party and opposition leader to Abhisit's government, serving as Deputy PM under Yingluck Shinawatra when the Pheu Thai Party won the 2011 elections. After the Cabinet reshuffles of 2013 he was demoted to Minister of Labour, but did become the leader of the CMPO.

Somchai Wongsawat (สมชาย วงศ์สวัสดิ์)

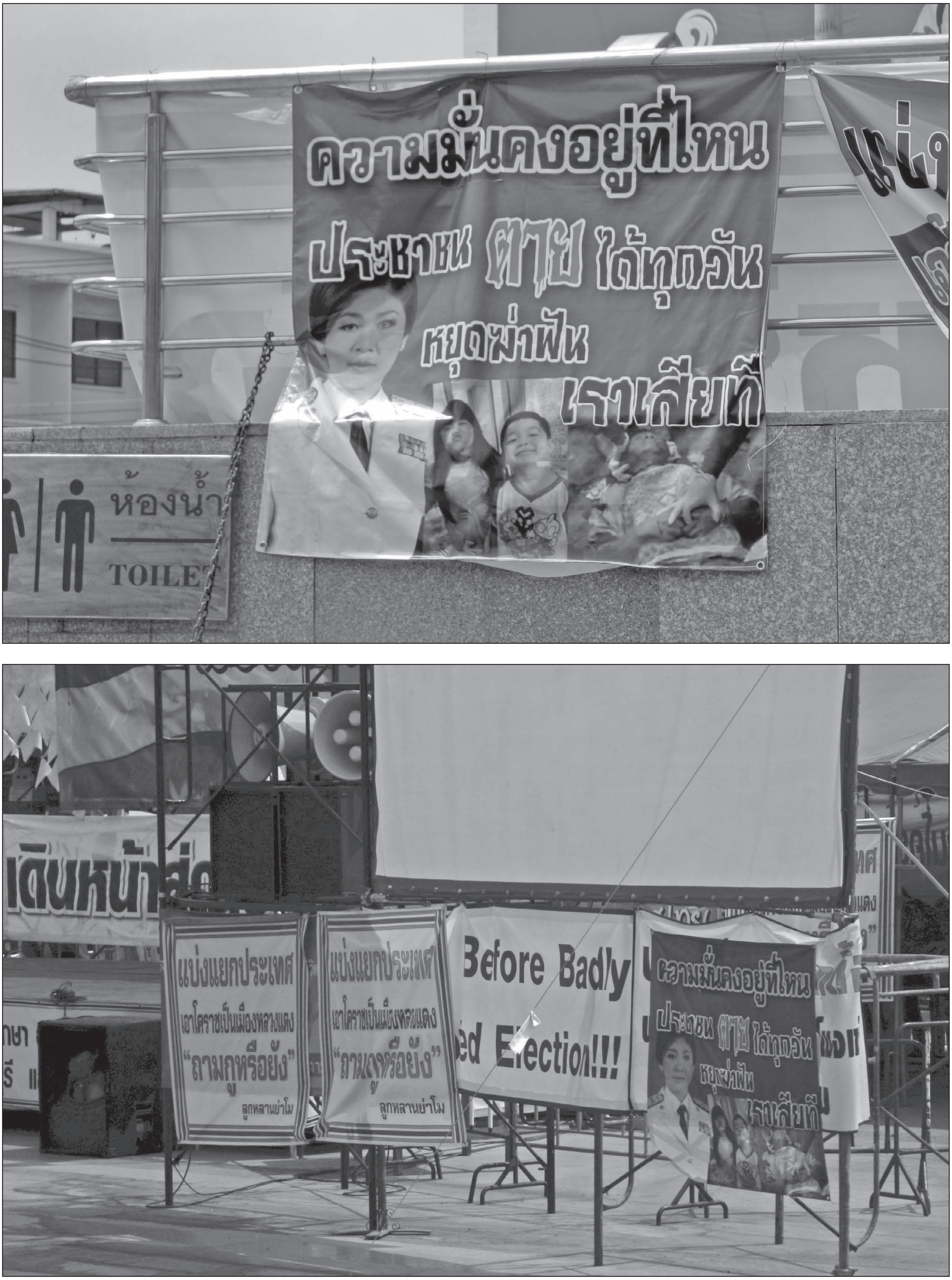
Somchai Wongsawat was born on 31 August 1947 to Choem and Sutsai Wongsawat. He is the brother-in-law to Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra, having been married to their sister Yaowapha; they have three children. Somchai's wife Yaowapha served as an MP in the Thai Rak Thai Party before being banned from politics after the 2006 coup. Prior to entering politics, Somchai was a civil servant in the judiciary, being appointed Permanent Secretary of Justice in 2000. He retired from that position, pursuing politics after the 2006 coup joining the Peoples Power Party and served PM Samak Sundaravej as senior Deputy PM, becoming PM when Samak was removed from office for conflict of interest and was elected PM by the National Assembly and appointed as PM on 18 September 2008. During the October 2008 siege at Parliament House, Somchai managed to escape by climbing a rear fence. Later that same month the anti-corruption body found Somchai in neglect of duty and removed him from the office of PM.

Abhisit Vejjajiva (อภิสิทธิ์ เวชชาชีวะ)

Born on 3 August 1964 in England to Thai parents, Abhisit Vejjajiva attended Eton College earning a BSc and an MSc from Oxford University. After graduation he taught at Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy and at Thammasat University. He is married to former classmate from England Pimpen Sakuntabhai who is now a lecturer at the mathematics department of Chulalonkhorn University. They have two children. At the age of 27 he was elected to the House of Representatives serving in the office of the prime minister. He narrowly lost the 2003 Democratic Party leadership election, a position he obtained two years later after the 2005 election defeat. In February of 2006, Thaksin Schinawatra dissolved Parliament and set an election date. Weeks prior to the election the military staged a coup and seized power; mere hours afterwards Abhisit denounced the coup. Abhisit lost to the Peoples Power Party candidate Samak Sundaravej in the 2007 elections, though Samak was later removed from office due to conflict of interest. Abhisit lost the National Assembly vote for next PM to Somchai Wongsawat, Thaksin's brother-in-law. A series of protests by the PPP followed until the party was banned from politics. Abhisit was formally appointed PM after the Constitutional Court removed Somchai Wongsawat from office for involvement in an election fraud scandal in December 2008, and became Thailand's youngest PM in over 60 years at aged 44. After a poor showing in the 2019 elections, Abhisit resigned as party leader.

Suthep Thaugsuban (สุเทพ เทือกสุบรรณ)

Suthep Thaugsuban was born on 7 July 1948 in Tha Sathon in Surat Thani where his father was the headman of a *tambon*. Suthep studied at Chiang Mai University where he graduated with a BSc in Political Science, achieving his masters from Mid Tennessee State


ความมั่นคงอยู่ที่ไหน
ประชาชน ตาย ได้ทุกวัน
หยุดฆ่าฟัน
เราเสียที
ห้องน้ำ
TOILE
แบ่งแยกประเทศ
เอาโคราชเป็นเมืองหลวงแดง
"ถามกูหรือยัง"
ลูกหลานย่าโม
Before Badly
ed Election!!!
เดินหน้า

Anti-Yingluck posters, Nakhorn Ratchasima, 2015. (Author's photos)

University. At the age of 26 he succeeded his father as headman. He has a common law wife, Srisakul Promphan who he has lived with since 1994. Suthep's family owns major shares in southern Thailand's oil palm and shrimp farms.

Suthep was an MP from 1979 and held the position of deputy minister for agriculture under two prime ministers from 1986 to 1994. When the Democratic Party returned to power in 1997 he was appointed minister of transport, a position he held until 2001. When Abhisit Vejjajiva became leader of the Democrats, he appointed Suthep as secretary-general of the party and Deputy Prime Minister when Abhisit became PM in 2008, a position he held all the way until 2011 when Yingluck Shinawatra became PM. In 2009 Suthep was accused of violating the Thai Constitution by having a large stake in a media firm that received concessions from the government; Suthep resigned as MP, which did not affect his position as Deputy Prime Minister and insisted this was not an admission of wrongdoing on his part.

Suthep led the opposition to Yingluck's government starting in 2013, triggered by her amnesty bill, he resigned his seat in the Parliament, quitting the Democratic Party to found the PDRC, with the main aim being to remove Yingluck from power and to form an unelected people's council to reform the political system of Thailand. Following the 2014 coup Suthep, like the other opposition and protest leaders, was detained by the NCPO, being charged with insurrection, he was released on bail after four days. Suthep resigned from politics and entered the Buddhist monkhood at Wat Tha Sai in Surat Thani. In July 2015 he became the leader of the Muan Maha Prachachon for Reform Foundation (the People's Democratic Reform Foundation) which backed the NCPO's constitutional referendum.

After several Criminal Court proceedings resulting from the deaths and injuries resulting from direct orders given by Suthep to the RTA during April and May 2010, the CRES, the DSI, and prosecutors filed murder charges against him and found him responsible along with Abhisit for the death of Italian journalist Fabio Polenghi and was given a seven-year sentence. Suthep was released from prison in late February 2021.

Samak Sundaravej (สมัคร สุนทรเวช)

Born on 13 June 1935 in Bangkok, Samak graduated from St. Gabriel's College, Assumption Commercial College, and the Thammasat University faculty of law. He was married to Khunying Surat Sundaravej, a financial advisor and had two children. Samak died of liver cancer on 24 November 2009 age 73. Samak was a well-known TV chef hosting the show Tasting Ranting on Thai ITV network and the RTA Radio & Television network since 1999, which he continued to do once he became prime minister and ultimately led to him being removed from office under conflict of interest clauses.

Samak was a Democratic Party member and held various positions in the governments leading up to the 2001–2006 Thaksin administration, which ended in the 2006 coup. The dissolved Thai Rak Thai Party was reorganised into the Peoples Power Party with Samak as the leader. The PPP won the 2007 election and Samak became the prime minister of Thailand, immediately being called a proxy for the Thaksins with street demonstrations following by the PAD. Samak's government was beset with trouble, with ministers resigning, as well as allegations of vote buying and failing to ask parliamentary approval over the Preah Vihear Temple bid by Cambodia for World Heritage Status. Samak refused to resign, despite numerous protests and the closure of both national airports and demands for his resignation. Samak was removed from office over conflict of interest in breach of the constitution. After much boycotting of votes and arguing, Deputy PM Somchai Wongsawat was ratified as the new prime minister of Thailand. Samak was convicted of libel and was sentenced to two years imprisonment, which was upheld after an appeal. Samak fled Thailand for the United States where he underwent cancer treatment.

Sondhi Limthongkul (สนธิ ลิ้มทองกุล)

Born on 7 November 1947 in Sukhothai to a Thai-Chinese family, Sondhi Limthongkul majored in history at the University of California, Los Angeles, and got his MA from Utah State University. Returning to Thailand, he worked initially for the *Prachatipatai* newspaper, later founding the *Manager Daily* newspaper as well as satellite platform ASTV. Initially he was pro-Thaksin, eventually becoming anti-Thaksin and the leader of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) – the Yellow Shirts – leading them in violent clashes with the government forces, seizing and controlling various government buildings and causing mayhem. When Abhisit became PM, Sondhi, being a Democrat supporter more or less stopped the PAD protests.

Sondhi was imprisoned in 2016 as the Supreme Court of Thailand upheld that he must serve the 20-year prison sentence handed out in 2012 for the falsification of documents to secure loans in 1997 from the Krung Thai Bank. He was released by royal pardon in September 2019.

Table 7: Prime Ministers of Thailand 2001 to Present

Full Name	Date	Political Party
Thaksin Shinawatra	9 February 2001 – 19 September 2006	Thai Rak Thai Party
Sonthi Boonyaratglin	19 September 2006 – 1 October 2006	Military
Surayud Chulanot	1 October 2006 – 29 January 2008	Independent
Samak Sundaravej	29 January 2008 – 9 September 2008	Peoples Power Party
Somchai Wongsawat	18 September 2008 – 2 December 2008	Peoples Power Party
Chavarat Charnvirakul	2 December 2008 – 17 December 2008	Independent
Abhisit Vejjajiva	17 December 2008 – 5 August 2011	Democrat Party
Yingluck Shinawatra	5 August 2011 – 7 May 2014	Pheu Thai Party
Niwatthamrong Boonsongoaisan	7 May 2011 – 22 May 2014	Pheu Thai Party
Prayut Chan O-Cha	24 August 2011 – 29 September 2014	Military
Prayut Chan O-Cha	29 September 2014 – present (2023)	National Council for Peace and Order

Appendix

Organisation and disposition of the RTA

1st Army Area (กองทัพภาคที่ 1) Lieutenant General Sukuwan Nogbualang HQ in Bangkok, controlling 26 provinces in central, eastern and western Thailand as well as the capital	
1st Army Support Command (กองบัญชาการช่วยรบที่ 1) (Bangkok)	21st Logistics Battalion, 21st Maintenance Battalion, 21st Ordnance Battalion 21st Signals Battalion
1st Combat Engineers Regiment, King's Guard (กรมทหารช่างที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์)	52nd and 112th Engineer Battalions
1st Division King's Guard (กองพลที่ 1 รักษาพระองค์) HQ: Dusit District, Bangkok	
31st Infantry Regiment, King Bhumibol's Guard (กรมทหารราบที่ 31 รักษาพระองค์ ในพระบาทสมเด็จพระบรมชนกาธิเบศร มหาภูมิพลอดุลยเดชมหาราช บรมนาถบพิตร) (Airborne infantry regiment) (Lopburi)	1st, 2nd, and 3rd Infantry Battalions, each with: HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company, and mortar platoon
1st Field Artillery Regiment, King's Guard (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 1 รักษาพระองค์) (Bangkok)	1st, 11th and 31st Artillery Battalions, each with three firing batteries
4th Armoured Battalion, 1st Division, King's Guard (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 4 กองพลที่ 1 รักษาพระองค์) -Bangkok	1st, 2nd and 3rd Armour Squadrons, each with one support platoon
1st Combat Engineer Battalion, King's Guard (กองพันทหารช่างที่ 1 กองพลที่ 1 รักษาพระองค์) (Bangkok)	
1st Combat Engineer Battalion, King's Guard (กองพันทหารช่างที่ 1 กองพลที่ 1 รักษาพระองค์) (Bangkok)	
1st Signals Battalion, King's Guard (กองพันทหารสื่อสารที่ 1 กองพลที่ 1 รักษาพระองค์) (Bangkok)	
1st Combat Medical Battalion, King's Guard (กองพันเสนารักษ์ที่ 1 กองพลที่ 1 รักษาพระอ) (Bangkok)	
1st Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Company (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 1) (Bangkok)	1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons
1st Cavalry reconnaissance company (ทหารม้าลาดตระเวนที่ 1) (Bangkok)	1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons
11th Infantry Regiment, King's Close Bodyguard (กรมทหารราบที่ 11 มหาดเล็กราชวัลลภรักษาพระองค์)	1st, 2nd, and 3rd Infantry Battalions, each with: HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
2nd Infantry Division, Queen's Guard (กองพลทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์) HQ Fort Phromyothi, Prachinburi province, eastern Thailand (mechanised infantry)	
2nd Infantry Regiment, Queen Sirikit's Guard (กรมทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง) (Prachinburi province)	Also known as the '*Eastern Tigers'*1st, 2nd and 3rd Mechanised Infantry Battalions, each with: HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
12th Infantry Regiment, Queen Sirikit's Guard (กรมทหารราบที่ 12 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง) (Sa Kaew province)	1st, 2nd and 3rd Mechanised Infantry Battalions, each with: HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
21st Infantry Regiment, Queen Sirikit's Guard (กรมทหารราบที่ 21 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง) (Chonburi Province)	Also known as '*The Queens Army* (or *soldier*) *Tigers'.* 1st, 2nd and 3rd Mechanised Infantry Battalions, each with: HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
2nd Field Artillery Regiment, Queen Sirikit's Guard (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง) (Prachinburi province)	2nd, 12th, 21st Artillery Battalions and 102nd Field Artillery Battalion, each with three firing batteries
Maintenance Battalion, 2nd Service Support Regiment (กองพันซ่อมบำรุง กรมสนับสนุนที่ 2)	
2nd Cavalry Squadron, Queen Sirikit's Guard (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 2 กองพลทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง)	1st, 2nd and 3rd Cavalry platoons
30th Cavalry Squadron 2nd Infantry Division, Queen's Guard (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 30 กองพลทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง)	1st, 2nd and 3rd Cavalry platoons
2nd Signals Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, Queen's Guard (กองพันทหารสื่อสารที่ 2 กองพลทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง)	
2nd Combat Engineers Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, Queen's Guard (กองพันทหารช่างที่ 2 กองพลทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง)	
2nd Medical Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, Queen's Guard (กองพันเสนารักษ์ที่ 2 กองพลทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง)	
2nd Anti-Tank Company, 2nd Infantry Division, Queen's Guard (กองร้อยต่อสู้รถถังที่ 2 กองพลทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง)	
12th Military Police Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, Queen's Guard (กองพันทหารสารวัตรที่ 2 กองพลทหารราบที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง)	
2nd Long Range Reconnaissance (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 2 กองพลทหารราบที่)	Two Patrol Companies (รักษาพระองค์ ในสมเด็จพระบรมราชชนนีพันปีหลวง)
9th Infantry Division (กองพลทหารราบที่ 9) HQ at Fort Surasi, Kanchanaburi Province, western Thailand *Black Panthers Division* (กองทัพเสือดำ) (light infantry)	
9th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 9) 19th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 19) 29th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 29)	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd light infantry battalions; in turn each with HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
9th Field Artillery Regiment (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 9)	9th, 19th and 109th Artillery Battalions, each with three firing batteries
9th Service Support Regiment (กรมสนับสนุน กองพลทหารราบที่ 9)	Transport, Medical and Maintenance battalions

9th Service Support Regiment (กรมสนับสนุน กองพลทหารราบที่ 9)	
19th Cavalry Squadron (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 19 กองพลทหารราบที่ 9)	
9th Combat Engineer Battalion (กองพันทหารช่างที่ 9 กองพลทหารราบที่ 9)	
9th Signal Battalion (กองพันทหารสื่อสารที่ 9 กองพลทหารราบที่ 9)	
9th Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Company (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 9 กองพลทหารราบที่ 9)	
11th Infantry Division (กองพลทหารราบที่ 11) HQ at Fort Somdet Phra Nangklao, Chachoengsao province, eastern Thailand	
111th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 111) 112th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 112)	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd infantry battalions; in turn each with HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
Maintenance Services Support Regiment, 11th Division (กองพันซ่อมบำรุง กรมสนับสนุน กองพลทหารราบที่ 11)	Transport, Medical and Maintenance battalions
2nd Cavalry Division, King's Guard (กองพลทหารม้าที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์) HQ in Bangkok	
27th and 29th Cavalry Squadrons, King's Guard	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd Cavalry platoons
1st Cavalry Regiment, King's Guard (กรมทหารม้าที่ 1 รักษาพระองค์ในพระบาทสมเด็จพระมงกุฎเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว)	1st, 3rd and 17th Cavalry Squadrons
4th Cavalry Regiment, King's Guard (กรมทหารม้าที่ 4 รักษาพระองค์ในสมเด็จพระศรีนครินทราบรมราชชนนี)	5th, 11th and 25th Cavalry Squadrons
5th Cavalry Regiment, King's Guard (กรมทหารม้าที่ 5 รักษาพระองค์ในพระบาทสมเด็จพระมงกุฎเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว)	20th, 23rd and 24th Cavalry Squadrons
12th Signals Battalion (กองพันทหารสื่อสารที่ 12 กองพลทหารม้าที่ 2 รักษาพระองค์)	
12th Service Support Regiment (กองพันซ่อมบำรุง กรมสนับสนุนที่12)	Transport, Medical and Maintenance battalions

2nd Army Area (กองทัพภาคที่ 2) Lieutenant General Sawarat Saengpol HQ in Nakhorn Ratchasima	
2nd Army Support Command (กองบัญชาการช่วยรบที่ 2)	22nd Logistics Battalion, 22nd Maintenance Battalion, 22nd Ordnance Battalion, 22nd Signals Battalion, 22nd Transport Battalion and 22nd Medical Battalion
2nd Combat Engineer Regiment (กรมทหารช่างที่ 2)	201st and 202nd Engineer Battalions
3rd Infantry Division (กองพลทหารราบที่ 3) HQ at Fort Suranari, Nakhorn Ratchasima	
3rd Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 3) 8th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 8) 13th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 13)	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd infantry battalions; in turn each with HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
3rd Field Artillery Regiment (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 3)	3rd, 8th, 13th and 103rd Field Artillery Battalions, each with three firing batteries
3rd Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนทหารม้าที่ 3 กองพลทหารราบที่ 3)	
3rd Service Support Regiment (กองพันซ่อมบำรุง กรมสนับสนุนที่ 3)	3rd Engineer, 3rd Medical and 3rd Signals Battalions
3rd Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Company (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 3 กองพลทหารราบที่ 3)	
6th Infantry Division (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 3 กองพลทหารราบที่ 3) HQ at Fort King Phutthayoda Chulalok Maharat, Roi Et province, Issan, north-east Thailand	
6th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 6) 16th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 16) 23rd Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 23)	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd infantry battalions; in turn each with HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
6th Field Artillery Regiment (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 6)	6th, 16th, 23rd and 106th Field Artillery Battalions, each with three firing batteries
6th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนทหารม้าที่ 6 กองพลทหารราบที่ 6)	With HQ & Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Platoons
6th Service Support Regiment (กองพันซ่อมบำรุง กรมสนับสนุนที่ 6)	6th Engineer Battalion, 6th Medical Battalion, 6th Signals Battalion, 6th Maintenance Battalion
6th Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Company (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 6 กองพลทหารราบที่ 6)	
3rd Cavalry Division (กองพลทหารม้าที่ 3) HQ at Fort Tinsulanonda, Khon Khaen province, north-east Thailand	
6th Cavalry Regiment (กรมทหารม้าที่ 6)	6th and 21st Cavalry Squadrons, each with HQ and Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons
7th Cavalry Regiment (กรมทหารม้าที่ 7)	8th and 14th Cavalry Squadrons, each with HQ and Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons

3rd Army Area (กองทัพภาคที่ 3) Lieutenant General Apichet Suthana HQ in Phitsanulok	
3rd Army Support Command (กองบัญชาการช่วยรบที่ 3)	26th Logistics Battalion, 26th Maintenance Battalion, 26th transport Battalion, 26th Medical Battalion, 26th Ordnance Battalion, and 26th Signals Battalion
3rd Combat Engineer Regiment (กรมทหารช่างที่ 3)	301st and 302nd Engineer Battalions

4th Infantry Division (กองพลทหารราบที่ 4) HQ at Fort King Naresuan Maharat, Phitsanulok province, northern Thailand	
4th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 4) 14th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 14)	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd infantry battalions; in turn each with HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
4th Field Artillery Regiment (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 4)	4th and 104th Field Artillery Battalions, each with three firing batteries
9th Cavalry Squadron (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 9 กองพลทหารราบที่ 4)	with HQ and Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons
4th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนทหารม้าที่ 4 กองพลทหารราบที่ 4)	HQ and Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Recce Platoons
4th Service Support Regiment (กองพันซ่อมบำรุง กรมสนับสนุนที่ 4)	4th Engineer Battalion, 4th Medical Battalion, 4th Signals Battalion
4th Company of LRRP (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 4 กองพลทหารราบที่ 4)	
7th Infantry Division (กองพลทหารราบที่ 7) HQ at Fort Khun Nen, Chiang Mai province, northern Thailand	
7th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 7) 17th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 17)	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd infantry battalions; in turn each with HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
7th Field Artillery Regiment (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 7)	7th and 17th Field Artillery Battalions, each with three firing batteries
1st Cavalry Division (กองพลทหารม้าที่ 1) HQ at Fort Phokhun Pha Mueng, Phetchabun province, northern Thailand	
12th Cavalry Squadron (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 12 กองพลทหารม้าที่ 1)	with HQ and Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons
2nd Cavalry Regiment (กรมทหารม้าที่ 2)	7th, 10th and 15th Cavalry Squadrons, each with three cavalry platoons and weapons platoon
3rd Cavalry Regiment (กรมทหารม้าที่ 3)	13th, 18th and 26th Cavalry Squadrons, each with three cavalry platoons and weapons platoon
21st Field Artillery Regiment (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 21)	20th and 30th Field Artillery Battalions, each with three firing batteries
3rd Service Support Regiment (กองพันซ่อมบำรุง กรมสนับสนุนที่ 4)	8th Engineer Battalion and 11th Signals Battalion
3rd Combat Engineer Regiment (กรมทหารช่างที่ 3)	301st and 302nd Engineer Battalions (301 กรมทหารช่างที่ 3, 302 กรมทหารช่างที่ 3)

4th Area Army (กองทัพภาคที่ 4) Lieutenant General Kriangkrai Srirak HQ in Fort Thep Satri Srisunthorn, Nakhorn Si Thammarat, the southern HQ for the RTA engaged with the southern insurgency	
4th Army Support Command (กองบัญชาการช่วยรบที่ 4)	4th Logistics Battalion, 4th Maintenance Battalion, 4th Transport Battalion, 4th Signals Battalion, 4th Medical Battalion, 4th Ordnance Battalion
15th Combat Engineer Battalion (กองพันทหารช่างที่ 15 กองพลทหารราบที่ 15)	companies assigned to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd (Separate) Infantry Battalions
5th Infantry Division (กองพลทหารราบที่ 5) HQ at Fort Thep Satri Srisunthorn, Nakhorn Si Thamarat province, southern Thailand	
5th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 5) 15th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 15) 25th Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 25)	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd infantry battalions; in turn each with HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company
5th Field Artillery Regiment (กรมทหารปืนใหญ่ที่ 5)	9th, 15th, 25th and 105th Field Artillery Battalions, each with three firing batteries
16th Cavalry Squadron (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 16 กองพลทหารราบที่ 5)	re-equipped from M41A3 light tanks to Commando V-150 armoured cars, with HQ and Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons
5th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนทหารม้าที่ 5 กองพลทหารราบที่ 5)	HQ and Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Recce Platoons
5th Army Support Command (กองบัญชาการช่วยรบที่ 4)	5th Engineer Battalion, 5th Medical Battalion, 5th Signals Battalion
5th LRRP Company (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 5 กองพลทหารราบที่ 5)	
5th Air Assets Company (flown out of Nakhon Si Thammarat)	2 x Bell 206B3, 3 x Schweitzer TH-300Cs
15th Infantry Division (กองพลทหารราบที่ 15) HQ at Fort Ingkhayutthaborihan, Pattani province, southern Thailand	
151st Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 151) 152nd Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 152) 153rd Infantry Regiment (กรมทหารราบที่ 153)	Each with 1st, 2nd and 3rd infantry battalions; in turn each with HQ & Support company, three infantry companies, weapons company and medical platoon
1st (Separate) Battalion, 15th Infantry Division, based in Pattani	1st Medical Company, 1st Engineer Company, 15th Engineer Company, 1st Psychological Warfare Company
2nd (Separate) Battalion, 15th Infantry Division, based in Yal	2nd Medical Company, 2nd Engineer Company, 15th Engineer Company, 2nd Psychological Warfare Company
3rd (Separate) Battalion, 15th Infantry Division, based in Narathiwat	3rd Medical Company, 3rd Engineer Company, 15th Engineer Company, 2nd Psychological Warfare Company
15th Service Support Regiment (กรมสนับสนุน กองพลทหารราบที่ 15)	15th Transport Battalion, 15th Logistics Battalion
15th Medical Battalion	component units split between the infantry regiments and the separate battalions
31st Cavalry Squadron (กองพันทหารม้าที่ 31 กองพลทหารราบที่ 15)	with HQ and Support platoon and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons
15th Combat Engineer Battalion (กองพันทหารช่างที่ 15 กองพลทหารราบที่ 15)	assigned to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd (Separate) Infantry Battalions (see above)
15th Signals Battalion (กองพันทหารสื่อสารที่ 15 กองพลทหารราบที่ 15)	
15th LRRP Company (กองร้อยลาดตระเวนระยะไกลที่ 15 กองพลทหารราบที่ 15)	

Bibliography

Captivating History, *History of Thailand, a Captivating Guide to the Thai People and Their History* (Captivating History: 2021)
Neher, Clark D., *Modern Thai Politics: From Village to Nation* (Cambridge, Mass: Schenkman Books, 1978)
Rongrong Wongobom, *History of Thailand, from Ancient Civilization until Now* (Torch Press: 2019)
Terwiel, B.J., *Thailand's Political History from the 13th Century to Recent Times* (Bangkok: River Books, 2011)

Programmes

10 Years of Red Shirt Protest in Thailand, WION, 19 May 2020
Bangkok Burns as Thai Protest Heat Up, Al Jazeera, 17 May 2010
Civil War in Thailand? Bangkok Rising, VICE News, 7 April 2017
General Thanajaro Inspects Troops, AP Archive, 30 August 1997
More Than a Dozen Killed in Thai Soldier Shooting Rampage, France 24, 8 February 2020
Naresuan 261, Thairath Online (Thai), 14 February 2018
Red Shirt Protesters Find Suspect Bomb Near Their Camp, AP, 24 July 2014
Royal Thai Army 2013, BangRTAF, 30 September 2013
Royal Thai Police: SWAT Advance Training (Foxtrot), Pichayaslip Naiyawit for Police TV, 17 July 2017
Soldier Dies as Red Shirts and Thai Military Clash, Al Jazeera, 29 April 2010
Thai Army Crackdown Scatters Protesters, Al Jazeera, 19 May 2010
Thai Army, Royal Thai Police Training, Pol.Jake556, 13 May 2021
Thai Military Declare Coup D'état, VICE News, 24 May 2014
Thai Red Shirts Revolutionary Spirit, France 24, 29 April 2010
Thai Soldier Live-Streams Mass Shooting in Shopping Mall, The Telegraph, 8 February 2020
Thai Troops Open Fire on Red Shirt Protesters, SKY News, 13 August 2009
Thailand Army: The Best Hell March, RankingAnime, 23 June 2020
Thailand Red Shirt Protesters Rally Outside Parliament, Al Jazeera, 7 June 2012
Thailand's Red Shirts Refuse to Back Down, Al Jazeera, 14 May 2010
Thailand's Red Shirts Regroup, Al Jazeera, 22 August 2010
Thailand's Red Shirts, 101 East, Al Jazeera, 15 April 2010
That Police Special Operation Antaraj 26 and Naresuan 261, BlackEagle Studio, 24 November 2018
The Battle of Bangkok, France 24, 28 May 2010
The King Endorses Coup Leader as Prime Minister, AFP News (Thai), 25 August 2014
Training With Commander AUM Royal Thai Police 23 June 2020, Goragot Haocharoen, 24 June 2020
What Thailand's Red Shirts Want, Al Jazeera, 13 April 2009
Whats Behind the Thailand Mass Shooting? DW News, 9 February 2020

Websites

Royal Thai Police Website: สำนักงานตำรวจแห่งชาติ (Royal Thai Police)
Royal Thai Police; Wikipedia
อรินทราช 26 – Arintaraj 26 official website
Nation Religion King: Thailand: Nation, Religion, King (nationreligionking.com)
Border Patrol Police Official Website: กองบัญชาการตำรวจตระเวนชายแดน – หน้าแรก (bpp.go.th)
Naresuan 261 Unofficial Website: main menu (archive.org)
Royal Thai Army Official Website: main menu (archive.org)

Notes

Introduction

1. For a fuller and more detailed account of the Royal Thai Army's involvement in the conflict in Vietnam and surrounding nations in the 1960s and 70s, see Helion's Asia@War *Erawan War* mini-series.

Chapter 1

1. See the appendices for a more detailed breakdown of the structure of the RTA.
2. Thai Department of Defence Press release, November 2011.

Chapter 2

1. Royal Decree, Proclamation Number 14, 1986.
2. 2013 figures from independent statistics compiled by Zachary Abuza.
3. Royal Thai Police document, 2010.
4. Thailand's Forgotten War, *The Nation*, December 2012.
5. *Pattani Order of Battle*, Royal Thai Police, 2012.
6. Bangkok Metropolitan Police Division HQ.

Chapter 3

1. Bangkok Post, 6 October 2008, accessed 10 September 2022.
2. Bangkok Post, 26 November 2008, accessed 11 October 2022.
3. Bangkok Post, 26 November 2008, accessed 08 June 2022.
4. RTA Speech, 27 November 2008.
5. ASTV broadcast, 27 November 2008, accessed 15 August 2022.
6. Abhisit press and television release, 11 April 2009.

Chapter 4

1. Thai TV, 25 April 2010, accessed 10 September 2022.
2. Al Jazeera broadcast 15 November 2010, accessed from YouTube on 08 August 2022.
3. PM Abhisit, Thai TV Channel 7, accessed on YouTube 9 July 2022.
4. Vice News, accessed 8 August 2022.
5. Thai TV Channel 7, 9 December 2013, accessed 12 August 2022.
6. Channel 5 News, 19 January 2013, accessed via YouTube 15 September 2022.
7. TV Channel 5, 21 May 2014, accessed via YouTube 12 October 2022.
8. TV Channel 5, address by General Prayuth, 21 May 2014, accessed 14 August 2022.
9. Vice News, 7 April 2014, accessed 12 August 2022.
10. These Friday night speeches still continue at the time of writing, with the outlining of the government's goals, ambitions, projects, aims and the promotion of peace and unity.
11. Bangkok Post, 27 May 2014, accessed 15 July 2022.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dean Wilson was born in Gibraltar of English parents, his father serving in the Royal Navy. He was raised in Italy where his father was attached to NATO and the US Army and attended local school, later attending American High School before their return to the UK. He worked as an electrical assistant on the local Army camp before joining the Ministry of Defence, first as a civilian guard and then in the MoD Police where he was a dry weapons trainer, control room operator and counter-terrorism officer. Dean has a BSc in Religious Studies with the Open University and is working towards an MA in military history specialising in the Cold War period. Dean was medically discharged from the MoD after sustaining an injury on duty, gaining employment with the NHS as a ward clerk. He has successfully published wargaming rules since 2008, starting with the Pacific Theatre before concentrating on the Cold War and modern warfare. His core rule set COLD WAR3! was used by Joint Strike Command in a table top exercise simulating a dirty bomb scenario in London. *Protest and Insurrection in the Land of Smiles: The Royal Thai Army & the Political Crisis of 2005-2014* is his first book with Helion & Company. Dean is married to a wonderful Thai lady who puts up with his toy soldier obsession and encourages his writing since his retirement from the NHS.